

Smitham Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique reference number | 101759 |
| Local authority | Croydon |
| Inspection number | 376619 |
| Inspection dates | 28–29 February 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Helen Hutchings |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 479 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Derrick Jones |
| Headteacher | Zoe Harris |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8–9 September 2008 |
| School address | Portnalls Road Coulsdon CR5 3DE |
| Telephone number | 020 8660 4399 |
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| Email address | head@smitham.croydon.sch.uk |

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Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings

Additional inspector

Clare Gillies

Additional inspector

Graham Tuck

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work including 24 lessons involving 17 teachers, assemblies and extra-curricular clubs. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and looked at documents including those relating to safeguarding, pupils' assessment information and pupils' work. They held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, and analysed questionnaires from 267 parents and carers, as well as those completed by a sample of staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils come from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are above that typically found in primary schools. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is in line with that found nationally. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and two Reception classes. The school provides a breakfast and after-school club. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant staff turnover, including teachers taking extended periods of leave, necessitating a number of temporary contracts. The school holds a number of awards, including the Primary Quality Mark for basic skills and an Eco-Schools Award. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key findings

- This is a good school which has improved significantly since its last inspection. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, commenting on its positive ethos and respect for all. Because the school has ironed out inconsistencies, pupils make steadily good progress in each year group and their attainment in English and mathematics is above average. The school is not yet outstanding because pupils are capable of reaching even higher levels of attainment.
- Pupils build well on the good start they make in Nursery and Reception. They achieve particularly well in reading, and their enjoyment of reading helps their learning in other subjects. Sometimes pupils' handwriting is not sufficiently fluent to enable pupils to put their ideas into writing quickly enough.
- Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching effectively builds pupils' confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Teachers plan lessons which actively engage pupils, often using the school grounds to good effect. Marking gives pupils good guidance on how to improve, but teachers do not routinely require pupils to respond directly to this feedback.
- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to school make a strong contribution to the school's sense of community. The way in which this large school is organised effectively encourages a family atmosphere. Pupils particularly appreciate how they are involved in school life and encouraged to take responsibility, such as setting up the tuck shop and raising awareness of the school's robust anti-bullying approach.
- The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are good. The headteacher and governing body have managed staffing changes well so that pupils' learning has not been disrupted. The school has successfully addressed the issues raised in the last inspection, including improving teaching, and is focusing now on improving outcomes in mathematics which are not quite as strong as in English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the good progress pupils already make in English and mathematics, by:
 - implementing the planned changes to the calculations policy so that pupils

- in each year group are clear about how they should undertake calculations
- developing the fluency of pupils' handwriting and giving pupils more opportunities to write at greater length
- ensuring that pupils routinely respond to teachers' written advice about how their work could be improved.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The improvements made in Nursery and Reception since the last inspection have resulted in children making good progress from their starting points on entry. Children's attainment by the end of Reception, including in literacy and numeracy, is now above average, which gives them a stronger foundation for later learning than was previously the case. The teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds) is well established and good transition arrangements mean that children's skills are built on systematically in Year 1. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because they thoroughly enjoy their learning and apply themselves well to their tasks. They work enthusiastically and collaboratively. For example, when the teacher indicated that a group should include a simile in their writing, pupils immediately began to discuss this, for example saying, 'You are as big as a giant.' The good opportunities pupils have to discuss their ideas before writing make a key contribution to the improved writing skills across the school. However, because handwriting is not given sufficient emphasis, it is developed less well than other aspects of writing such as spelling and punctuation, and reduces pupils' ability to write at length. Pupils develop their reading skills well throughout the school, shown in their above-average attainment at the end of Years 2 and Year 6.

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire think that the school meets the needs of individuals well and that their children make good progress. These views are confirmed by the inspection. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. In recent years the school has successfully narrowed the gap between the performance of boys and girls so that the difference is now smaller than that found nationally. Pupils speak about their enjoyment of how teachers use outdoor areas to make learning practical and how the games they play help their learning, for example in developing positional language in mathematics. Pupils apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well across the curriculum. This was seen to good effect when Year 5 pupils used the school's new portable computers and investigated software features to log external temperatures and illustrate the change over the last two weeks. Learning in this lesson was particularly strong as pupils discovered and worked things out for themselves.

Quality of teaching

The extremely positive views of parents and carers about teaching in the school are accurately summarised in comments such as, 'A good range of activities and teaching

strategies,' and, 'The booster classes help confidence and understanding.' Pupils are confident that they learn a lot in lessons and consistently good teaching ensures their steady progress through the school. This is largely because school leaders have developed an effective system to track pupils' progress and ensured that the assessments teachers make of pupils' work and progress are accurate. Teachers use this information well to provide work at levels which match pupils' earlier attainment and to pick up any pupils beginning to fall behind quickly. A wide range of programmes is used to enable pupils to catch up if they are experiencing difficulty or to accelerate the progress of more-able pupils. Teachers' priority on improving writing skills has successfully improved pupils' attainment, particularly increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in the Year 6 national tests. Although attainment is above average and progress rates are good through the school, staff have rightly identified that the way methods of calculation are taught in each year group is not sufficiently clear.

The broad curriculum and links between subjects support teachers well in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and parents and carers remark on the imaginative approach teachers take to making lessons exciting. For example, pupils learned about life in The Gambia while practising their writing skills in a task about a child's first visit to a market. The well-chosen resources of African clothing and other items which might have been found in a Gambian market were typical of the range of resources teachers use regularly to enrich and enliven learning. Teaching assistants and adult volunteers make a good contribution to learning by questioning pupils' understanding and providing encouragement for pupils to do things for themselves. Regular oral feedback and detailed marking gives pupils a good understanding of the quality of their work and pupils find the regular review of their targets motivating. Improvement points are identified routinely, particularly in writing, but teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to respond to these quickly to check that pupils have understood the advice given and address any misconceptions at an early stage.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The large majority of parents and carers identify behaviour and the extent to which their children feel safe in the school as areas of strength. This view is endorsed by pupils and inspection findings. Pupils say that instances of bullying are rare and that, if it does occur, the school deals with these situations extremely effectively. There is a strong commitment to resolving relationship issues quickly. Pupils say that most disagreements are about differences of opinion about games in the playground and that more serious inconsiderate behaviour, such as name-calling or racist language, is extremely rare. Parents and carers indicate their appreciation that issues are dealt with effectively when brought to the attention of the school. When moving around the school and at social times, pupils are typically considerate and polite which considerably eases congestion in the narrow corridors. Pupils are adept at managing their own behaviour with minimal intervention from adults. In an assembly, a love of reading was engendered as part of Book Week activities. Despite high levels of excitement, pupils returned quickly to quiet and focused concentration.

In the majority of lessons, pupils' positive attitudes to their learning are supported by consistently applied behaviour management strategies which are carefully graduated

through the school. Good behaviour is effectively rewarded. In a few lessons, when pupils did not like the subject or did not find the work interesting, a few lacked the resilience to continue with their tasks without a reminder from an adult. The school effectively supports pupils with identified behavioural needs or who face particular personal or social challenges, so that there is minimal disruption to the learning of others. Attendance is above average and the school's robust systems for monitoring and supporting those whose attendance has caused concern in the past have proved successful. Pupils' punctuality is a strength and parents and carers appreciate the almost daily personal welcome by the headteacher.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and other leaders demonstrate an appetite for improvement, which is shared by other staff. Staff morale is high because staff know what the school is trying to achieve and their part in it. The governing body provides good support, and governors' direct involvement in school life gives governors a realistic insight into the school's work and where further improvements are needed. Self-evaluation is accurate and the priorities for improvement in development plans are focused well on activities to raise pupils' achievement. A key indicator of the strength of the school's leadership is how prompt and effective action has successfully minimised disruption to pupils' learning during a time of significant staff change. At the same time, leaders have effectively continued to improve the quality of teaching and learning, for example by involving staff in training alongside colleagues from other schools. Since the last inspection, the school has built well on the strengths evident at that time and effectively improved those areas requiring improvement. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved significantly and this track record demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

Many parents and carers commented positively on how well all pupils, regardless of their ability or circumstances, are included in school life. Opportunities for groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are similar and designed to meet individual needs. Any form of discrimination is challenged robustly by all school leaders and the governing body. A commitment to safety permeates the school and all school leaders and governors ensure arrangements for safeguarding, including those relating to child protection, meet statutory requirements. The curriculum gives pupils many memorable experiences, including residential trips and special activities within the school. The recent introduction of the 'Smitham University' has been received with enthusiasm by pupils and strongly promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development alongside helping them to develop additional academic skills. Breakfast and after-school clubs address a wide range of needs and interests. They are well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by those participating.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Smitham Primary School, Coulsdon CR5 3DE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us recently when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work in lessons. We agree with you that Smitham is a good school and we can see how it is improving all the time. As we promised some of you, I am including the main points of our report below.

- You get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception and learn letters and sounds well.
- Your behaviour is good and you are considerate of one another which helps in the narrow corridors and to make playtime enjoyable.
- You are safe in school because adults follow up any concerns quickly.
- Teachers make learning interesting and you have plenty of opportunities to learn outside.
- Your regular attendance helps you to make good progress because you do not have gaps in your learning.
- Your headteacher leads the school well and all the staff are keen to make it even better.

We have asked the headteacher and your teachers to work at three things.

- Your teachers have plans to introduce new ways to help you with your calculations and we agree that these will help you in mathematics.
- We think that you should have more opportunities to practise your handwriting which will help you to write more quickly in your longer pieces of writing.
- We have asked your teachers to make sure that you have time to respond to the advice they give you when they mark your work.

We know that you will continue to work hard and make the best possible progress.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector

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