

Sythwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125084
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359833
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Richard Blackmore

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bruce McLaren
Headteacher	Susan Tresilian
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They held meetings with the pupils, staff, the headteacher and three governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at records of pupils' progress and at plans, policies, minutes of the full governing body and sub committee meetings and self-evaluation documents. They received and analysed 273 completed questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The start that children get off to in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the quality of provision for communication, language and literacy and emotional development.
- The reasons for any variation in the rate of pupils' learning across different classes and between different subjects with a particular focus on mathematics.
- The impact of action taken by school leaders in improving provision and raising attainment and learning and progress.

Information about the school

Sythwood Primary School is a larger than average sized school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils who do not use English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also higher than average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided in Nursery and Reception classes. The school shares its site with a Children's Centre and has a resource base for pupils with visual impairments. The number of pupils entering and leaving during the school year is higher than average. The school has gained many awards, including the Healthy Schools award and Activemark, and runs a breakfast and after school club.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils do well because of the effective teaching and good care, guidance and support they receive. The pupils make good progress in all areas of learning, including communication, language and literacy and emotional development, from the time that they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good progress is maintained throughout the rest of the school and, as a result, attainment is average by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement from pupils' below average skill levels on starting school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for whom English is an additional language make the same good progress as other pupils because of the well-targeted additional support they receive. Good quality teaching and learning are the key factors behind pupils' success. However, progress is slightly slower in mathematics because there has been a recent focus on reading and writing and teachers do not set a wide enough range of practical activities and real problems for pupils to solve. Pupils have positive attitudes to their activities and are keen to learn. The overwhelming majority of parents support the school and are pleased with the experiences provided for their children. One parental comment typical of many stated, 'I think Sythwood is a lovely school with caring, helpful and enthusiastic staff.'

Pupils' strong personal outcomes can be seen in their good behaviour. Their mature attitudes are further seen in their eagerness to play a part in the life of the school and take on responsibilities. From the youngest to the eldest, pupils relish the chance to be a school council member or a monitor, or to act as a 'chaperone', escorting younger pupils back to class after lunchtime. Pupils also contribute significantly to the local community, for example through 'Enterprise Week' which raises money for local charities.

The teachers mark the pupils' work conscientiously, often suggest how the pupils can improve and, in the best lessons, ask high calibre questions that make pupils think hard. Teachers plan lessons carefully and include a good variety of activities and use resources effectively to keep the pupils on their toes, although the level of challenge does not always extend pupils. This is particularly true for the more able pupils who waste time doing work that is too easy, particularly at the start of lessons.

Well-informed and sensitive support ensures pupils feel safe in a supportive learning environment, enhanced by warm relationships between staff and pupils. Interventions, such as specific strategies to improve writing skills in small groups, for pupils with visual impairments from the resource base and special educational needs and/or disabilities are well planned and the success of this support leads to particularly good progress. The safety and well-being of pupils are given a high priority and consequently safeguarding requirements are firmly embedded and put into practice.

The headteacher, senior staff and governors are striving, through the well-structured school development plan, to strengthen learning. Subject leaders have been enabled to be

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fully involved in the accurate and clearly structured self-evaluation and have a rigorous focus on the learning and progress of pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels are now ensuring pupils make good progress, because they use and share information from tracking data effectively to pinpoint where extra support is needed. Consequently, there is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils and the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further, particularly in mathematics by:
 - providing more practical opportunities to use mathematical skills
 - ensuring problem solving tasks are more frequently set for pupils.
- Bring the quality of all teaching up to that of the best by ensuring teachers:
 - ask questions to challenge pupils' thinking.
 - plan sufficiently challenging tasks for all pupils, particularly the more able
 - maintain sufficient pace to ensure good progress

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Recent improvements to the teaching of writing, including targeting groups with particular difficulties and making sure that pupils are given specific and detailed help based on teachers' assessments are now embedded throughout the school. This was clearly evident in an English lesson for Year 1 pupils where they were made to think carefully about the sounds of unfamiliar words, such as 'come' from the story of Mr Gumpy's Day Out because of the teacher's awareness of difficulties pupils had experienced the previous day. In Key Stage 2, the 'exciting writing' project ensures pupils are given good examples of effective vocabulary and narrative structures to use in their own work. This is having a good impact on the quality of pupils' work and their enjoyment of extended pieces of written work.

The inspection took a particular interest in the level of challenge and progress of pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 2 because national data for 2010 indicated that pupils did less well in mathematics than in English. Lesson observations showed that progress in mathematics was good, although still behind English, as seen in the way pupils adeptly calculated and used data in different situations. However, practical tasks and problem solving opportunities were too infrequently planned, limiting the speed of pupils' gains in knowledge and skills when faced with problems to solve.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported through sensitive care and patient guidance. Pupils from the resource base for visual impairment are carefully included in lessons within the main school and are challenged to continually perform at a high level.

The school has successfully improved attendance and this is now satisfactory, and this is contributing to faster progress because pupils are missing fewer lessons and important steps in their learning. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well and can talk knowledgeably about the need for a well-balanced diet and the need to take regular exercise. Pupils are well prepared for when they start secondary school and for their future lives.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers develop good relationships with pupils, use information from previous lessons well and provide practical and interesting tasks. The teachers place a strong emphasis on learning and as a result, the pupils are encouraged to engage in meaningful discussions and ask searching questions. The pupils are clear about what is expected of them and are given opportunities to evaluate their own performance. They find their individual targets in literacy useful, although teachers do not always follow up on these rigorously enough when evaluating pupils' work to ensure improvement in subsequent tasks. There are occasions when teachers and staff who support learning do not inject enough pace into lessons and tasks do not demand enough of pupils, resulting in periods of time when pupils do not make quick progress. In mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is not as consistent as it is in other subjects because teachers are not planning activities which systematically and incrementally develop their investigative skills. There is too little evidence in the pupils' work of tasks that demand the use and analysis of a wide range of information to solve problems.

The school has adopted the International Primary Curriculum and this has helped base learning around what pupils find interesting and relevant. It is focused on the needs and interests of the pupils and the community it serves. For example, pupils enthusiastically write about their own and other cultures. Staff and subject leaders have added a creative

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dimension to this approach and have devised topics which engage pupils' interest in their learning. In a Year 4 lesson, one pupil described the 'pyroclastic cloud' being the result of an eruption from a volcano and another talked thoughtfully of the 'heartbreaking' consequence for the environment, thus contributing successfully to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The curriculum has been enriched further through visits and visitors, including the residential trips which begin in Year 4 and do much to enhance pupils' social development. The school provides a breakfast club and after-school club which are enjoyed by pupils, as are the 25 extra-curricular clubs, many of which are over-subscribed. Other strengths in the curriculum include French throughout Key Stage 2, specialist music tuition and good provision for information and communication technology.

There are good arrangements to ensure that all pupils are cared for well, including following up on unexplained absences. It works effectively with other agencies to provide strong support for potentially vulnerable pupils, helping them to overcome barriers to learning. This is carefully combined with the school's provision; for example, the home-school link worker helps pupils settle happily into school through working with the children's centre, and assists with problems that might occur as they move through the school. Pupils say they feel safe, but if they did have worries they would be happy to seek staff help. In response to concerns raised, the school organises transition groups for those who are concerned about moving from classes or to the local high school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement through regular observations to assess the quality of teaching. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and ensures resources are used where they can impact most effectively. Increased expectations of progress rates by senior leaders are accelerating achievement for all groups of pupils in different subjects and all year groups. However, monitoring does not check sufficiently that weaknesses that are previously identified are fully addressed. The promotion of community cohesion is good. The school provides many events and activities that draw together members from the local community. Pupils from all backgrounds get on well with each other and the school is a harmonious place in which to work and play. Good plans have been established to provide pupils with an opportunity to engage with others through national and international links. The school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils and to eliminating any form of discrimination is good and is evident in its analysis of how well different groups of pupils perform. The school has secured effective partnerships and is also actively engaged in promoting links with local primary and secondary schools to share expertise and improve

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the quality of what it offers. Parents are given good opportunities to give views on the school and benefit from regular newsletters, text messaging and information evenings on aspects of the school's work such as development in the teaching of numeracy and literacy and how parents can support learning at home. There are good procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils, and school leaders ensure that staff receive effective guidance to enable them to identify issues that would raise concerns about pupil well-being. The systems in place for recruiting and checking the suitability of all adults working with pupils fully meet requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning because the quality of provision is good. The Nursery and Reception classes offer a highly stimulating and welcoming environment. During the inspection, children were very interested in the dressing-up areas, including Little Red Riding Hood's house, where they effectively developed their skills of speaking, listening and sharing. Nursery nurses and other support staff give the class teachers good levels of help, consequently planning purposeful days and providing a good balance between children's choices and tasks guided by the teacher. These strengths continue in Reception, where there is also a good mix of indoor and outdoor work. Links with parents are very effective, enabling them to understand what their children will be learning at school. However, the outdoor area is limited and does not provide enough opportunities to develop writing skills. The leadership and management review their practice and the setting regularly. The 'remains of the day' assessments at the end of each day are fully used to plan the next steps in children's development. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a good level of response from parents, who expressed very supportive views of the school. On most items on the questionnaire, over 90 per cent of respondents believe that the school is doing a good job. They are especially pleased with the teaching and how much their children enjoy school. A few parents feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors agree with the positive views of the majority of parents and found behaviour to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sythwood Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 273 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 456 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	147	54	122	45	4	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	147	54	117	43	6	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	92	34	158	58	12	4	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	74	27	184	67	8	3	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	108	40	151	55	4	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	96	35	150	55	15	5	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	104	38	151	55	8	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	84	31	166	61	8	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	27	178	65	8	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	21	170	62	27	10	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	70	26	169	62	17	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	105	38	142	52	10	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	123	45	138	51	5	2	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sythwood Primary School, Woking GU21 3AX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us during the recent inspection. We were pleased with many things and agree with you and your parents that you are at a good school. We were especially happy to find that:

- You make good progress between Nursery and Year 6.
- Your attainment is average.
- Your behaviour is good, you feel safe at school and are good at helping others in school and the local community.
- Most lessons have good teaching.
- You work hard in lessons.
- You have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise in order to stay healthy.
- Your attendance has recently improved and is now average. Well done and keep it up.
- The headteacher and other senior staff lead the school well.

For the school to improve further, it needs to raise the standards you reach, especially in mathematics, by providing you with more practical and problem solving activities. We have also asked your headteacher to increase the proportion of good or outstanding lessons by ensuring all of them have the features we saw in the best ones: a lively pace, work to suit all pupils and asking you questions that really make you think. You can help too by telling your teacher if you find work too easy.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at Sythwood Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Lead inspector

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