

Sevenoaks Primary School

Bradbourne Park, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3LB

Inspection dates 18–19 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. They achieve well because teaching is good.
- Early reading and writing skills are taught well in the Reception classes and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils learn quickly because teachers make learning interesting and meaningful by linking subjects together.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes towards learning. They behave well most of the time and are friendly and well mannered. They feel safe and take good care of each other.
- The school provides a very wide range of activities outside lessons and this contributes well to pupils' great enjoyment of school.
- Leaders have maintained a good pace to improvement throughout a period of transition and staff changes. Consequently, pupils' attainment continues to rise.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching closely and set sharp targets to help it improve.
- The governing body is very knowledgeable about the school and provides good challenge to other leaders.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the work of the school. They support it well by raising substantial funds and by helping their children with work at home.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The gap between the attainment of pupils supported through additional government funding (the pupil premium) and others is not closing quickly enough. Leaders do not check the effect of initiatives for these pupils closely enough so that successes can be identified and built on.
- Although teaching is good, there are still some minor inconsistencies. Pupils' differing needs are usually met well but occasionally teachers do not stretch the more able enough in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with the headteacher or other senior managers. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 105 parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors also talked to some parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, heard pupils read, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress, planning and monitoring documents, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding information.
- The inspectors analysed 29 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Teresa Davies

Additional inspector

Clementina Ogunsanwo

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but around a fifth are of other ethnic heritage, including Indian, Pakistani and Polish. Only a few speak English as an additional language.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding given to the school for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is below average. In this school, most eligible pupils are in the first of these categories.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the time of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were out of school on a residential visit.
- The breakfast club is managed by the governing body. An after-school club managed by an external provider was not inspected.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close more quickly the gap between pupils supported by the pupil premium and others by:
 - ensuring that eligible pupils have all the help they need both in and out of lessons to improve their attainment in English and mathematics to the same level as others
 - checking the progress of eligible pupils more closely and regularly so that changes can be made quickly if support is not improving attainment and progress fast enough.
- Ensure that there is always enough challenge for more-able pupils in numeracy lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When they start school in the Reception Year, most pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Pupils make good progress across the school, and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' attainment is improving and national test results in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2012 were the best ever for the school.
- In the Reception classes, children learn new skills quickly. A strong focus on children's personal and social development ensures that they learn to persevere and to work sensibly in small groups.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils develop good numeracy and literacy skills, enabling them to use these skills effectively to support their learning in other subjects. Over the last year, the school has overhauled its approach to how pupils learn about letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and this has helped to improve further early reading and writing skills. Less-able pupils in Year 2 confidently use letter sounds to read unknown words and, as they get older, pupils use increasingly complex language and punctuation to bring their writing alive.
- In numeracy, most groups achieve well, with pupils in Year 6 using their skills accurately to solve problems and to investigate numbers and patterns. Just occasionally, the most-able pupils are not challenged well enough in lessons, and this slows their learning.
- For most groups, the school successfully promotes equality by ensuring that they make at least good progress. However, the school has not been successful enough in closing the gap between the attainment of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium and others. Although the gap in national tests at the end of Year 6 narrowed slightly in 2012, it was still larger than that found nationally, with eligible pupils around a year behind their classmates in English and mathematics. Additional and more-focused support is being given to these pupils in the current year, and the gap is now narrowing more quickly than in the past. However, progress is still inconsistent and the gap is not closing quickly enough.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, attain well in national tests and make the same good progress as others in lessons. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given good support, both in and out of lessons, and also make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and is sometimes outstanding. It inspires pupils to do their best and it makes learning exciting. Pupils are keen to learn because teachers encourage a 'have-a-go' attitude so that they understand that sometimes you improve by making mistakes.
- Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations. They encourage pupils to work hard and to produce high-quality work. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers use questioning particularly effectively to help pupils to think for themselves and to explain their ideas. For example, in a geography lesson in Year 5, the teacher made excellent use of models and computers to help pupils to understand how rivers are formed.
- In the Reception classes, there is a good balance between activities taken by the teacher and times when children choose for themselves where they are going to work. Teachers use imaginative ways to encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, learning was outstanding in a mathematical development session when children become 'explorers' and 'designers' to find out about symmetry.
- Teaching assistants are organised well so that they have a good effect on pupils' learning, especially when working with disabled pupils or those with special educational needs. They are well informed, supporting pupils sensitively so that they do not become over reliant on adult help.
- Teaching is not outstanding because there are a few occasions when work does not provide

enough challenge for the most able in mathematics lessons. Teachers' marking of work in English gives pupils good guidance about how to improve but this good practice is not seen as frequently in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning are a key factor in helping them to make good progress. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons because pupils are keen to learn and to try out new activities without fear of failure.
- The school's high rates of attendance are indicative of pupils' great enjoyment of school. As one pupil said, 'School is exciting and we learn new things all of the time.'
- Pupils are polite and courteous, and work hard, but behaviour is not outstanding because there are a few occasions in lessons when they do not pay enough attention to the teacher, especially when moving between activities. In addition, a small number of pupils who have identified behavioural problems are supported well to help improve their social skills, but they still sometimes fall out with others at lunchtimes.
- Pupils feel very safe at school. They say that there is very little bullying, but when it does happen, it is tackled well by staff. They know how to stay safe when using the internet and they talk confidently about how to avoid dangers outside school.
- The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination very effectively. Pupils from different backgrounds play together very happily. They sensibly share their ideas in lessons, showing good respect for views that may differ from their own.
- Pupils keenly take responsibility, and this helps them to develop good confidence and independence. The school council plays a good part in decision making. Pupils are pleased that 'the headteacher is always willing to listen to our ideas'.
- The breakfast club is enjoyed by pupils. Members of staff plan interesting activities that give pupils a happy and purposeful start to the day.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders continue to ensure that their high ambitions for the school are understood by all staff. They respond quickly when weaknesses emerge. For example, this year, leaders introduced an additional group for mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2 so that the needs of middle-attaining pupils could be met more closely following a dip in their progress in 2012. This has already helped to greatly improve the rate at which they are learning new skills as their needs are being met more closely now.
- Planning for improvement is thorough and is setting the right priorities for the next stage of the school's development as it prepares for its increased intake in the next academic year.
- Despite some staff absences over the last year, all leaders, including those in charge of subjects, take a good part in checking teaching and learning. They have a good track record for improving teaching. Teachers are set clear targets to help them improve and they are given additional support when needed. Training in areas such as the teaching of phonics has helped to tackle comparative weaknesses, and leaders are doing the right things to ensure that all teaching is good or outstanding.
- The school has a wealth of information to show pupils' progress and attainment, and uses it effectively to see how well different groups are doing. However, assessment information about how well pupils are benefiting from the pupil premium is not checked with enough rigour or regularity to see if initiatives are having the desired effect. In the current year, the pupil premium has been used to fund additional support both in and out of lessons as well as to pay for access to the wide range of clubs and visits offered by the school. While this has successfully supported pupils' personal development, leaders know that the impact on their progress is not

consistently good. At times, there is not enough focus on supporting these pupils, both in and out of lessons.

- There is a rich and varied curriculum (subjects and the topics taught) that is greatly enjoyed by pupils. There is a successful focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They speak fondly of a fairly recent Olympics visit by pupils from a school in London which helped them learn about life beyond Sevenoaks.
 - The local authority has provided light-touch support for this good school. School leaders work closely with other local schools to share expertise and to provide help where it is needed.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The well-trained governing body is knowledgeable about the school and what it does well or still needs improving. Governors make good use of school, national and local information to compare performance and to set challenging targets for leaders. They are kept well informed by the headteacher, and they monitor teaching and the quality of work carefully by being linked to classes. This helps them to manage the performance of teachers rigorously and to ensure that only good teaching is rewarded through pay increases. Governors are beginning to provide more challenge to other leaders so that the pupil premium is used more successfully to close the gap for eligible pupils. They have already identified that not all current projects are having enough effect. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118551
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	413228

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Collins
Headteacher	Alan Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2010
Telephone number	01732 453952
Fax number	01732 464660
Email address	headteacher@sevenoaks.kent.sch.uk

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