

# Sissinghurst Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Common Road, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, TN17 2BH

## Inspection dates

6–7 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
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.

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher and a strong team of staff who share the drive and vision for the school.
- Pupils make outstanding progress and standards in English and mathematics are significantly above average by the time they leave.
- Teaching is good with some examples of outstanding teaching.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, and are polite, friendly and well behaved.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel very safe. Attendance is high.
- Leadership and management are good. Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the progress pupils make, so that high standards have been maintained.
- The governing body knows the school well and provides effective support.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching that is inspirational and enriches pupils' learning as well as it might.
- The pace of teaching does not always make sufficient demands on pupils.
- Middle leaders and the governing body have not yet fully developed their monitoring role in order to have a greater impact on school improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons or part-lessons, most of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector talked to pupils about their work and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector took account of 36 responses to the online Parent View survey, the school's own parental survey, three written comments from parents and carers, and spoke to some parents and carers at the start and end of the school day. The inspector also took account of 19 questionnaires returned by staff.

## Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Sissinghurst is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and only a very few pupils speak English as an additional language, which is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children of service families is well below average. At Sissinghurst, all the pupils eligible for the pupil premium are those eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. There is a nursery on the school site that is managed by a private provider and therefore not included in this inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has moved into a brand new building and a new headteacher was appointed in 2010.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain pupils' outstanding achievement and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - ensuring that in all lessons, teaching inspires and stimulates pupils, and enriches the quality of their learning
  - making sure that the pace of all teaching makes appropriate demands on pupils of all abilities.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
  - fully developing the monitoring role of the governing body and middle leaders.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Children start at the school in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are broadly at the expected levels for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards of attainment in English and mathematics are significantly above average.
- In the 2012 national tests at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics was above that found nationally, and significantly so in reading and mathematics.
- Despite a slight dip in 2012 in the progress pupils made in English from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6, progress is typically outstanding as most pupils make faster progress than found nationally. This is supported by pupils' current work in English and the school's assessment data for pupils in the current year groups.
- All groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, generally make similar progress and achieve exceptionally well over time because support is carefully tailored to meet individual needs.
- From year to year, there are very few pupils eligible to benefit from the pupil premium. In the 2012 tests, when just two pupils were eligible, attainment was two years behind other Year 6 pupils in the school in English as measured by their average point scores. In mathematics, attainment was four months behind other Year 6 pupils in the school, but better than found nationally, and these pupils made better progress than others nationally and in their class.
- Children get a good start to school in the Reception Year. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children and they develop children's confidence and independence well so they make very good progress in their learning.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 have a secure knowledge of phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make), which helps them read unfamiliar words and develop their writing skills. In the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2012, taken by the current Year 2 pupils, the proportion achieving the expected result was above average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in reading by the end of Year 2 and the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6 was considerably above that found nationally. Reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils enjoy reading and talk with enthusiasm about a range of authors and can discuss their preferences for different types of books. Most pupils are confident, fluent readers with excellent comprehension skills by the end of Year 6.

### The quality of teaching

### is good

- Teachers mostly engage pupils well in their learning through fun and interesting lessons and, as a result, pupils want to do well and work hard.
- Notable strengths in teaching are good relationships between teachers and pupils, and skilled questioning that successfully builds on what pupils already know, encourages their thinking skills and extends their learning.
- Pupils enjoy tackling challenging work and show great determination and concentration. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, were thoroughly engaged and motivated in solving mathematical problems based around budgeting for making a film. Teaching was inspiring, promoted pupils' independence, thinking and investigative skills, and enriched their learning. Pupils worked extremely well together and made outstanding progress in solving logic problems. Occasionally, lessons do not inspire pupils to this extent and, as a result, pupils' learning is not of the same high quality.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and know their targets for learning. Teachers mark work regularly, mostly giving good pointers on how pupils can improve their work, which was an aspect for improvement in the previous inspection.
- On a very few occasions, teaching in lessons does not make enough demands on pupils to work

at the fast pace of which they are capable and so they do not get through as much work as they could.

- Skilled teaching assistants who provide extra support for groups or individuals promote pupils' outstanding progress very well and make a significant contribution to ensuring that pupils learn exceptionally well, and especially those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is good, and sometimes it is outstanding, which results in pupils making outstanding progress over their time in school. Reading is taught well and small-group guided reading sessions with teachers help pupils to develop comprehension and higher-level skills.
- Children start their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage with a positive learning experience. A broad range of opportunities is planned, for example finding out about bugs in the 'Bug Research Lab' and making their own information books. Activities inspire children's interest and ensure they make excellent gains in their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and school records show that this is typical of behaviour over time.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, work hard and want to do well. Pupils appreciate the new building. Many agreed with one pupil who said, 'We love the big learning spaces and all the outside areas for play; we can do so much more than we used to.'
- Pupils are polite and friendly, and enjoy coming to school, as shown by their high attendance. They are great ambassadors for their school. They live up to and promote the school's values of 'CARE' - Commitment, Achievement, Respect and Equality.
- Some pupils, and parents and carers, however, have a few concerns about behaviour and are not convinced that it is good, and some parents and carers are not confident that the school deals with rare cases of bullying effectively. The inspector found that the school manages behaviour well and the small number of pupils who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour are supported well. Teachers do not allow any behaviour issues of individuals to disrupt learning for other pupils.
- In discussions, pupils say they feel safe and secure in school, and parents and carers are unanimous in their view that their children are safe in school. Inspection findings support this view.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and, if any incidents do occur, they are confident to talk with staff in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and things will be sorted out. They have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms such as name-calling, physical bullying, cyber-bullying and prejudiced-based bullying.
- They know how to protect themselves when using the internet and older pupils are good advocates for safe internet use. A younger pupil was very proud of her bookmark made by a pupil in the Year 4 and 5 class that gave her reminders about using the internet wisely.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given such as school council members, house captains, head boy and head girl, and other roles that help the smooth running of the school day.
- Pupils are particularly proud of the school's recent Green Flag award in recognition of their work in the Eco-schools programme. The team of 'Eco-Warriors' are very active in promoting sustainability throughout the school.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher provides highly effective, positive leadership and has built a strong staff team with a shared drive for further improvement.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have created an excellent learning environment both inside and outside in their planning and management of the new school building.
- Accurate self-evaluation and rapid action has resulted in improvements where weaknesses have been identified. Senior leaders recognise what aspects of teaching and the school's performance work well and what needs improving, demonstrating clear capacity for further improvement.
- Pupils' progress is checked thoroughly. Targets are set for teachers that are linked well with the progress pupils make, and teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to pay and salary progression. Procedures to manage the performance of staff provide a clear evaluation of teachers' work in the classroom and determine the support and guidance required to secure improvement.
- The headteacher has correctly identified the need to further develop the monitoring role of middle leaders, who provide skills and expertise in their particular areas of responsibility. Actions are already taking place to ensure they have a greater impact on whole-school improvement and teaching.
- The subjects taught are well planned to meet the needs as well as the interests of pupils. Appropriate emphasis is given to learning basic skills, and there are good opportunities to use literacy, numeracy and communications skills across different subjects. Visits and visitors to the school, clubs and extra activities enhance pupils' learning and help them to develop personal and social skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and underpins all that the school does. The school's ethos of care and support, and valuing and including all pupils, demonstrates its commitment to securing equal opportunities for all and that pupils learn without fear of discrimination.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and are well known and implemented by all staff.
- The local authority provides 'light-touch' support to this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Members of the governing body know the school well. They are well informed by the headteacher and have a good understanding of how the school's performance compares with schools nationally, its strengths and areas to develop. Governors provide experienced and valued support for the school and an appropriate balance between support and challenge for senior leaders. There is a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and the links between teachers' performance and decisions about salary progression. The governing body knows about the use of the pupil premium funding and agree how it is spent, for example in additional teaching assistant hours, training on managing behaviour and to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged, by funding trips and clubs. The governing body has recently revised its structure and way of working, which has enabled governors to support and challenge the school. Governors have undertaken a self-review and have correctly identified that increased monitoring and strategic planning will help increase its effectiveness and its ability to hold the school to account for its performance. The governing body meets its statutory requirements including those for safeguarding.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118717
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	403362

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	147
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pauline Skinner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cathy Penfold
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01580 713895
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