

South Hill Primary School

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1TT

Inspection dates

8–9 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders have not secured sufficient improvement to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection, particularly in key stage 2.
- Governors have not been fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has limited their effectiveness in holding school leaders to account.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in key stage 2. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 are not high enough.
- Teaching assistants do not always intervene quickly enough during lessons when pupils need support.
- In key stage 2, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. As a result, the level of challenge offered to pupils varies too much and is often too low.
- The progress made by the most able pupils in particular is not sufficiently rapid, given their generally high starting points.
- Gaps in teachers' subject knowledge, in subjects such as geography, prevents pupils from making good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Effective leadership of the early years means that children make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they move into Year 1.
- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved in key stage 1. In 2015, attainment in all subjects was significantly above the national average at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities are well supported and make progress at a similar rate to their peers.
- Pupils are cared for well. They are given effective support in developing as individuals. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth of pupils is encouraged well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
 - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is at least good in all classes in key stage 2.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - the work which teachers set builds effectively on what pupils already know
 - the work set for the most able pupils is consistently challenging
 - teaching assistants provide more effective support to pupils during lessons
 - teachers have good subject knowledge in all national curriculum areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Since the last inspection, there has been a high turnover of staff. Nineteen of the 33 respondents to the staff questionnaire were not members of staff at the time of the previous inspection. There have been significant changes to the leadership team with several key management appointments made over the course of the current academic year. The frequency of changes in staffing was remarked on by parents and contributed to the dip in attainment in the Year 6 national tests in 2015. Recently appointed leaders are contributing well to improvement, but the changes they are managing are, in some areas, at a relatively early stage.
- The headteacher understands what needs to be done to improve the school further and has developed comprehensive plans to address remaining weaknesses. School leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years and key stage 1, and pupils' progress has improved as a result. However, the impact of key changes designed to drive improvement in key stage 2 is limited and the evaluation of pupils' progress is sometimes inaccurate. While the low standards in Year 4 and Year 6 are clearly identified, little progress has been made in addressing this issue. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching remains and, consequently, insufficient progress is made by pupils across key stage 2.
- Senior leaders in the school have a clear vision for its improvement and have the wholehearted support of the staff team, who are convinced that leaders are taking the school forward, as their response to the Ofsted questionnaire confirms.
- A large majority of parents consider South Hill to be an improving school. Parents say that they are encouraged to become involved in the school and regularly consulted for their views. The provision before and after school is valued by parents.
- School leaders strive for and achieve a cohesive school community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered effectively by a wide array of social and sporting options. Links with schools abroad widen horizons and give pupils an insight into the lives of their counterparts in Kenya and Nigeria. This experience is further developed by an annual 'international week'.
- The performance management of teaching has been robust in its approach to tackling any under-performance by teachers, but initiatives to raise standards have been hampered by the high staff turnover. New teachers receive a thorough introduction to the school's policies and practice, and have opportunities to view outstanding practice in other schools as part of a wide range of training.
- The curriculum has been improved significantly since the last inspection, when opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and skills in areas other than English and mathematics were judged to be too limited. The curriculum is now broader and themes are used to emphasise the links between different subjects. However, the effectiveness with which different subjects are taught varies and pupils' learning is sometimes hampered by gaps in teachers' knowledge. Consequently, progress in some subjects in key stage 2 is too slow.
- School leaders ensure that the funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and is having a positive impact on their achievement.
- Sport funding is used well. A specialist coach is employed who supplies a wide range of sporting options for pupils and is deployed to support teachers in line with the school's assessment of where impact can be most significant. Pupils say that they have a good choice of sports and participation rates are high.
- The programme of extra-curricular activities is broad and is advertised and celebrated on the school's website. A programme of visits and external links are used effectively to support and enhance learning.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic about their subjects. In English and mathematics, they show a clear understanding of pupils' performance information. Their evaluation of the quality of pupils' work was in line with what inspectors found during this inspection. They were aware that attainment in Year 4 and Year 6 was significantly below age-related expectations. In other subjects, such as geography, subject leaders had identified gaps in the subject knowledge that teachers require to provide a consistently high level of challenge to pupils, particularly the most able. A training programme to address this issue is in place and improvements have already been made.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator took up her post in January. Improvements in the early identification of pupils' needs have been made and have led to more timely and effective support being put in place. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities are beginning to make more rapid progress from their different starting points.

- The promotion of modern British values is undertaken systematically. Teachers make good links between lessons, assemblies and displays to present key aspects of the values that underpin life in Britain. Pupils develop a good understanding and see the relevance of these values to their own lives.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are ambitious for the school and highly committed to it. However, they have not been fully aware of the weaknesses in pupils' progress through key stage 2. This has limited their effectiveness in holding leaders to account and in planning for school improvement.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures and practice are kept under close and effective scrutiny. Governors make effective checks to assure themselves that safeguarding procedures are kept up to date and known by all staff in the school.
 - Governors exercise care in monitoring the school's spending of the pupil premium and the primary sport funding and ensure that value for money is achieved.
 - Governors have taken advice from the local authority, which has provided an extensive programme of support to the school. Effective support has led to improvements in teaching and contributed to raising standards in Reception and key stage 1.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All records are maintained to a good standard. Staff are trained in necessary procedures with due regard to current requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much between classes and subjects in key stage 2. Not enough teaching is consistently good or better, particularly in key stage 2. Teachers do not always plan accurately on the basis of what pupils already know and can do. Consequently, progress is slower than it should be.
- Too often, pupils do not move on in their work as quickly as they should in key stage 2. In too many lessons teachers fail to provide work which stretches the most able pupils. Tasks which challenge pupils to think harder are often only provided after they have completed work in which they are already secure.
- Expectations are not consistently high enough in key stage 2. Teachers' questioning does not encourage pupils to use reasoning and problem-solving skills. This was reflected in books, where older pupils practise too few of the investigative and evaluative skills that would lead to a greater number making expected or more than expected progress.
- The feedback which is given to pupils about the ways in which they may improve their work is inconsistent in quality. Pupils in key stage 2 often repeated the same errors in their work as they were unclear as to what they had done wrong and what they needed to do to improve.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is not always good enough to provide high levels of challenge for pupils. In a Year 4 geography lesson pupils were asked to add a key to a map without any indication of the detail or style to be employed. This was a task offering too little challenge for pupils for whom age-related expectations include knowledge of coordinates.
- A whole-school 'art week' was taking place during this inspection. Some effective teaching was seen, with teachers giving specific advice about different drawing techniques. Pupils in Year 5, inspired by the work of the artist Quentin Blake, showed a good command of shading and created some highly effective drawings as a result of the technical guidance that they had received.
- Teaching assistants are often involved in planning and provide effective support to pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities. However, sometimes they do not always intervene quickly enough during lessons when pupils need support and, as a result, learning time is lost.
- In key stage 1, there is comprehensive coverage of topics in mathematics. Teachers set clear expectations and model high standards of presentation. Learning takes full account of what pupils already know and can do and pupils are clear about their next steps because feedback from teachers is thorough.
- In key stage 1, writing is taught well. Pupils regularly write for different purposes and different audiences. They are helped to develop their vocabulary and encouraged to use more complex language. There was evidence of good progress in pupils' books since September in both writing and mathematics.
- There was evidence of good progress in other subjects in key stage 1. In music, pupils sang and gained an understanding of pitch because it was linked to physical acting-out that made the concept easy to understand. In a Year 2 art lesson pupils made a collage using sophisticated examples as models and drew the perceptive and appreciative remark from a pupil that this was like 'drawing with scissors'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal and social development is fostered carefully. Pupils of all ages say they enjoy school and that the adults there take good care of them. Relationships in the school reflect a sense of community, something specifically remarked on by the pupils themselves. This view was supported by parents in their responses to the Parent View questionnaire and in what they wrote in accompanying statements. A large majority of parents would recommend the school to other parents.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth of pupils is encouraged well. Pupils are given an insight into different faiths and beliefs, assisted by visitors to the school. Themed days offer pupils the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of the world. An upcoming musical theatre production was being rehearsed with enthusiasm and skill during the inspection.
- The school's varied, multi-level site offers stimulating contexts for play; one area is a 'village' of different buildings. Pupils take care of the school premises, indoors and out. Supervised sports at lunchtime give pupils the opportunity for vigorous exercise, of which they take full advantage.
- Membership of the school's pupil council is taken very seriously by those elected to it, including by its very youngest members. They believe that they have a distinct voice in the school and that their opinions are valued by adults. Older pupils are given opportunities to act as prefects and also as 'buddies' helping their younger peers. They exercise these roles diligently.
- Pupils are given good advice about how to keep safe in different situations. They understand how to be sensible when using modern technologies and how to keep safe when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are punctual and arrive at lessons ready to learn.
- Break and lunchtimes are calm, orderly and civilised. When using the bikes made available for play, pupils are mindful of each other's safety. They are ready to take turns and to share.
- When teaching is good, a large majority of pupils show high levels of attentiveness and perseverance. In lessons where objectives are less clear or expectations too low, a small minority of pupils drift in their attention.
- The school works effectively with a small number of pupils who have difficulty in managing their behaviour. Other pupils acknowledged that some pupils had difficulty in always behaving well, but knew that adults addressed the issue, and did not let themselves be unduly distracted.
- Attendance is broadly average. Persistent absence is low.
- Fixed-term exclusions are rare.

Outcomes for pupils **require improvement**

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2015 was broadly in line with the national average. This represented a dip in attainment from the previous year when attainment had been significantly above the national average.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils to allow any general conclusion to be drawn about their achievement in relation to national averages. Evidence during the inspection showed disadvantaged pupils making progress broadly in line with their peers.
- Current standards in Year 6 are below age-related expectations in English and mathematics. Inspectors saw some good-quality work in science but in history and geography work is not consistently completed in sufficient depth or detail. The topic books for older pupils showed that different subjects had been brought together. For example, as part of a history topic, pupils had to incorporate an electric circuit but the task was too simple and did not challenge pupils sufficiently, meaning they did not achieve as well as they could.
- A secure grounding in phonics skills gives pupils confidence in attempting new words when reading. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their favourite books. However, the end of key stage 2 test results for reading indicate that pupils have not progressed rapidly enough from a successful early start. Pupils now

write more than previously in a variety of contexts and for varied audiences but they do not make enough progress across key stage 2.

- The most able pupils in key stage 2 are not given sufficient challenge in mathematics on a regular basis. Books for older pupils showed pupils practising calculation skills to good effect but not using and applying their knowledge and skills to investigate and solve problems.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics check was above the national average, as it had been in the previous two years.
- At the end of Year 2, in 2015, pupils' attainment was significantly above the national average in all subjects. This was an improvement since the previous inspection. A large majority of disadvantaged pupils made at least expected progress and matched the national average of other pupils in reading and mathematics. These increases were a consequence of leaders' improving teaching.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress. In 2015 they attained similar levels to their peers at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities make good progress, from their various starting points, at a rate similar to other pupils.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years leaders have a thorough and accurate knowledge of the strengths and areas that require further improvement in the Reception class.
- Children join the Reception class with skills and abilities that are slightly below those typically seen. They make good progress across the year and are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they move into Year 1. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development in 2015 was above the national average.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged children is used effectively and these children are typically at age-related expectations by the end of the Reception Year, which represents good progress from their starting points.
- The school has good links with the Nursery settings from which many of the children transfer. The information that these settings provide helps to ensure a smooth transition into the school.
- The information that is shared with parents through their children's 'learning journeys' is usefully supplemented by online reporting. Parents are appreciative of this and it makes it easier for them to be more fully engaged in their children's learning.
- Initial skills in reading and writing are taught thoroughly and children make good progress. In a writing activity inspired by Van Gogh's painting 'Starry Night', children demonstrated a secure knowledge of phonics. They were able to blend separate sounds to make good attempts at spelling words that captured the mood of the painting.
- Children make good progress in developing their understanding of mathematics. During this inspection children were seen accurately counting and completing simple addition problems with a good degree of accuracy.
- Children's good behaviour is firmly established in the early years. Children share and take turns without fuss and readily tidy away when required to do so. They talk politely to each other and to the adults around them.
- Children are given a broad experience in the early years that successfully promotes their personal development and learning behaviours. The learning environment is stimulating and children help to keep it well organised. However, the outdoor learning area is relatively small and limited use is made of it. This contributes to an occasional over-reliance on adult-initiated activities, which places some limits on the development of children's independence.
- Children with special educational needs or disabilities are given the necessary support to help them to progress well.
- Children are cared for well. Arrangements for safeguarding are maintained to the same good standard as in the rest of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	117110
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10011829

This inspection 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	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Bevan
Headteacher	Sarah Bourn
Telephone number	01442 402 127
Website	http://southill.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@southill.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 June 2016

Information about this school

- South Hill Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- There is an above-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is below average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in all classes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined in observations with members of the inspection team and the majority were conducted in this way.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and middle leaders. Other meetings were held with six governors, including both the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- The 78 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. A high proportion of parents responding also chose to make a written statement with the 'free text' online facility; these were also taken into account. Additionally, there were informal discussions with parents at the school gate. Thirty-three members of staff completed the Ofsted survey of their opinion, which was also considered during the inspection. The school's own surveys of parents', staff members' and pupils' opinions were also consulted.
- Inspectors considered a broad range of school documentation. These included school records for current and past progress and attainment, attendance and behaviour records, minutes of governing body meetings and information about safeguarding and pupils' welfare.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke to them about their learning. There were also meetings with groups of pupils. Inspectors observed pupils at lunch, at play, arriving in school and moving about the building.

Inspection team

Paul Copping, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rachael Judd	Ofsted Inspector
Sandra Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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