

Sowe Valley Primary School

Princethorpe Way, Coventry, West Midlands CV3 2QX

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Together with the wider leadership team, they have made significant improvements in teaching and pupils are achieving well across the school.
- The latest school performance information and the work in pupils' books show that achievement in all year groups is good. Pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers and teaching assistants work together closely to support pupils' development.
- Some teachers do not consistently set activities that extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. They work and play happily together. Pupils' positive attitudes to school make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Some teachers do not routinely follow the school's marking policy to ensure that pupils' work improves.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of enrichment activities, visits and visitors, which extend their experiences and personal development.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Children are supported effectively, which enables them to make good progress. They are prepared well for Year 1.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching do not focus closely enough on the progress of particular groups of pupils.
- Leaders and governors have taken effective action to ensure that the school is improving. They have a very clear understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be further improved.
- Parents do not receive enough information about the learning and progress their children make.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently set work at the right level of challenge to enable pupils to make even stronger progress
 - making sure that teachers enable pupils to improve their work by consistently following the school's marking policy
 - improving the monitoring of teaching with a clearer focus on how effectively individuals and groups of pupils learn and make progress in lessons.
- Improve communications with parents so that they are more regularly informed about the progress their children make.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, in partnership with the deputy headteacher, has secured improvements in the quality of teaching, and consequently pupils' outcomes. Leaders, governors and staff share a strong sense of purpose and a clear ambition for continued improvement.
- The drive to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement has been successful and these aspects are improving rapidly. Inconsistencies in pupils' progress have been ironed out and pupils now make good progress throughout the school. Weak teaching has been eradicated and the quality of teaching is now good.
- Leaders at all levels, including those responsible for subjects, are supported well in developing their roles and in making effective use of progress information to check that pupils make good progress in each year group. Meetings with teachers to discuss the progress of individual pupils have enabled leaders to become more actively involved in school improvement. This focus has led to improvements in teaching in key stage 1 that have resulted in higher standards at the end of Year 2.
- Teachers are held to account for the quality of their teaching, pupils' learning, and assessment. The leadership team makes good use of information from regular monitoring of teaching, and cross-references these observations with checks on pupils' work, to develop teachers' skills and improve teaching. However, the monitoring of teaching does not take enough account of the impact of teaching on the progress of groups of pupils in lessons.
- The subjects taught in the school give pupils a rich and varied experience. The school offers a range of extra-curricular clubs such as 'mad science', cooking and the code club. Visits to Coombe Park and visitors such as the Greek soldier provide variety and excitement and motivate pupils in their learning. Termly topics such as 'Sowe Valley and me' and 'The Romans' bring together aspects of many different subject areas including music and art. The topics effectively develop pupils' interests and ensure that they acquire knowledge in a range of subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the school's clear vision and values and reflected throughout its work. Pupils learn about other religions and cultures through visits to local religious centres and invitations from faith groups, which reflect the multicultural community that the school serves. These activities help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of British values and participate in various national celebration and commemorative events linked to, for example, the second world war and the royal family. Pupils are tolerant, understand their rights and responsibilities and put democratic principles into practice when they apply for various positions of responsibility in school.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support small-group sessions and one-to-one support as well as providing opportunities for pupils to work with the learning mentor, or receive additional support for their emotional well-being. As a result, disadvantaged pupils progress well and the differences between their performance and that of their classmates are reducing rapidly.

- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used well to ensure that all pupils become more physically active. Funds provide a specialist coach who takes sports lessons in conjunction with the teachers. The school now provides a much wider range of sporting opportunities and inter-school competitions, such as the Coventry East school games. Pupils' participation has increased in after-school clubs such as those for golf, fencing and tennis. As a result, pupils develop healthier lifestyles and improved physical well-being.
- The responses to the online survey (Parent View) indicate that the vast majority of parents believe that the care for their children is good or better, and their children are happy at school. However, a number of parents indicated that not enough information is given to them about the progress their children make.
- The school has welcomed the effective support from the local authority in successfully tackling those areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection. However, the school is not complacent and works effectively with a network of local schools to continue this cycle of improvement. Staff welcome the opportunity to share ideas, observe teaching and share good practice.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing board are wholly dedicated to the school and to continuing its journey of improvement. They are enthusiastic, well informed and they have a realistic, strategic view of the school's long-term development.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do to improve further, including how it compares with other schools, how well different groups of pupils achieve and the quality of teaching. Governors bring to their roles a wide range of relevant experience and expertise, which they use well to challenge school leaders on every aspect of school life.
- Governors ensure that systems to manage the performance of staff, including the headteacher, are rigorous. They check that objectives match the needs of the school while supporting staff in their own development. Governors ensure that action is taken if teaching falls below the required standard.
- Governors have a good understanding of school finances, including how pupil premium and sport funding is spent. They are aware that there has been a focus on reducing the differences between the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils and their peers, receiving reports on the review of this expenditure and considering further recommendations.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher has ensured that all staff and governors have read and acted upon the latest guidance on keeping children safe, including the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. The school works very well with its key partners to ensure that all pupils are safe and cared for well. The school's website provides parents and carers with guidance on how to keep their children safe when using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the whole school and they are now consistently good. Weak teaching has been swiftly tackled. As a result, most pupils across the school make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in the quality of their explanations and the way they model learning for pupils. Pupils readily grasp key learning points, particularly the basic skills in English and mathematics. Teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils to think through questions and explain their answers in detail. In science, effective questions encouraged pupils to discuss which equipment was 'battery operated' and 'mains operated' together and this developed their thinking skills.
- Staff have adopted a well-structured approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants lead lessons that engage pupils and effectively develop pupils' early reading skills. Pupils read well and enjoy reading both in and out of school. They enthusiastically talk about the books of their favourite authors such as Jacqueline Wilson and Roald Dahl. Regular, structured opportunities to read effectively develop pupils' comprehension and vocabulary skills.
- Mathematics is taught well. Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary so that pupils can express their understanding and explain their methods. Teachers ensure that pupils develop the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils use these skills well when writing for different purposes.
- Teachers take account of pupils' interests and pupils enjoy having a say in what they learn. For example, in a history lesson about the second world war, pupils focused on local aspects such as the bombing of Coventry Cathedral. They were able to identify that it was incendiary bombs that were used to cause the fire, although the walls remain.
- Other adults make a positive contribution to lessons, particularly for those who find learning difficult. They work well to support those pupils who need to catch up, using appropriate teaching resources and asking questions effectively to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The most able pupils are typically presented with work that requires them to think carefully about their learning and demonstrate their mastery of both mathematics and the English language. Their books show that from their starting points the most able pupils make good progress. They frequently take leading roles on the school council and in fund-raising activities.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but not all follow the school's marking policy closely enough to ensure that pupils improve their work.
- In some lessons the work is not set at the right level of difficulty for pupils. When this happens pupils' learning slows down because the work is too easy and they are ready for more demanding work. Consequently, this limits the amount of progress pupils make.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are confident learners, well equipped for their lessons and settle quickly to their work. Most books are neat and tidy. Pupils enjoy helping each other when working together on tasks and activities. They rise well to challenge and persevere even when they find work difficult.
- Pupils are confident that they are looked after well. Playtimes and lunchtimes are happy and sociable occasions. Pupils sit and chat together and welcome the opportunity to socialise with their friends. Pupils act responsibly when playing ball games in the playground, where they are well supervised.
- The school's work to promote respect and tolerance is well established. There was no derogatory language heard during the inspection and pupils know that such language would not be tolerated. Pupils are clearly proud of their school and appreciate the many varied opportunities they are given to support them in their learning and development.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including those relating to race and gender. Pupils say that there is very little bullying and that when it does occur, staff quickly tackle it. In addition, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. For example, older pupils who spoke with the inspector have an increasing understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet and the importance of not providing their personal information.
- The breakfast club is popular and this ensures that pupils get to school on time. It is well organised and gives pupils a nourishing start to the day as they relax, play games and complete homework tasks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In school, pupils are polite and respectful. They care for others around them and are kind.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and respond well to the teacher's instructions. They are keen to learn and show positive attitudes to their work. Occasionally, a small number of pupils become distracted and lose interest when the activity they are doing does not fully engage them.
- Leaders keep detailed records of any incidents of poor behaviour. These show the effectiveness of the procedures for improving behaviour. The rewards and sanctions system is understood fully by pupils. Pupils told inspectors about the school's initiative 'Good to be Green' and that good manners and acts of kindness are rewarded with badges and 'star pupil' awards.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive on time. Attendance is currently in line with the national average. Leaders are taking effective action to work with parents of children who have low attendance to make them aware of the benefits of regular attendance. As a result, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is below average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement across the school has improved since the last inspection and their outcomes are now good. This success is due to the determination of senior leaders and governors to raise expectations and improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's leaders have taken decisive and highly effective action to deal with pockets of past underachievement. They hold frequent meetings to check on the progress of every pupil. Any pupil who is in danger of falling behind is given additional support to enable them to catch up. As a result, pupils are making good progress across different subjects.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in the new curriculum this year in reading, writing and English grammar, spelling and punctuation was similar to other pupils nationally. Work in books and the school's tracking of pupils' performance show that the large majority of pupils in year groups are making good progress. From their starting points across key stages 1 and 2, most pupils are making good progress and reaching the expected standard, or better than expected standard, for their age.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check show that pupils make a good start in understanding the sounds that letters represent. Pupils enjoy reading, both for pleasure and to find information. Older pupils are enthusiastic readers, have favourite authors and recognise the features of a good story.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are now making good progress. Work in books shows that pupils are reaching the expected standards for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in year groups as they move through the school.
- Leaders carefully check the effectiveness of extra help given in class to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff adapt the activities and materials given to these pupils wherever necessary to make sure that pupils make good progress. Effective targeted support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties make at least expected progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the extra support for their learning. They have access to all the opportunities at school, such as clubs and trips, and are given any necessary extra support to help them catch up. Consequently, differences in attainment and progress between groups have diminished or are closing swiftly across all year groups currently in school. This is an improving picture on the differences reported in published performance information last year.
- Standards are rising across the school because of the school's strong focus on improving teaching and raising aspirations. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps as they move through the school, ready to start their secondary education.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and management of the early years provision are good. Working well together, the leader and teachers develop children's sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them, and ensure that they develop in a caring and stimulating environment.
- A large majority of children join the school with skills and knowledge typically below that for their age. By the end of Reception, children, including disadvantaged children, make good progress from their starting points across all areas of learning and the majority reach a good level of development. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The early years leader has established highly effective links with parents and pre-schools. As a result, children settle quickly when they enter Reception. High expectations and the consistent reinforcement of daily routines in a nurturing environment establish a firm base for children's excellent behaviour. They learn to care for each other and to share when they are playing together.
- Staff plan the children's work well, mindful of their different ages and stages of learning, and the weak language, communication and mathematical skills with which they start school. Prompts for learning are adjusted to suit the children's level of understanding and there is a good degree of clarity about what learning is expected in each activity, indoors and out. On occasions, tasks given to children are not sufficiently demanding enough to challenge them to make even more progress.
- Early reading and writing skills are taught successfully. Children quickly learn to read and to use their phonics skills when reading and spelling. They use joined-up writing well as they begin to write stories, using capital letters and full stops.
- Children begin to write numerals accurately and to record simple number sentences as they learn to count, add and subtract. They enjoy making up their own challenges in mathematics, such as using fishing lines to collect fish that have numbers on and laying them out in numerical order. The well-planned activities help children to demonstrate their deepening understanding of basic mathematical concepts.
- The safety of children is good. Staff are diligent in monitoring children and are confident in the actions to take if they have any concerns about a child's safety. Staff receive good-quality training in all aspects of keeping children safe, including child protection and paediatric first aid.

School details

Unique reference number	103671
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10009241

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Chappell
Headteacher	Carole Carter
Telephone number	02476 456063
Website	www.sowevalleyprimary.co.uk
Email address	school@sowevalley.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The early years provision is full time in Reception.
- A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- The school provides a breakfast club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum standards expected nationally for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 12 lessons, six of which were seen jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 6.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school and examined their responses to the online questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and pupils that completed the online questionnaires.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the chair of the governing body and three governors, a local authority representative and school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' current and recent progress; planning of work in different subjects; leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Nelson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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