

Sutton Oak CofE Primary School

Goodban Street, Sutton, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 3QD

Inspection dates

31 October – 1 November 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors are ambitious in their improvement planning. Leaders carefully monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their plans against school improvement priorities.
- Leaders ensure that ongoing training for staff continues to support school improvement.
- Leaders know pupils well. They have improved teaching, accelerated pupils' progress and enhanced outcomes in all three key stages.
- Behaviour around the school is good. Pupils are polite, considerate and courteous.
- Pupils are self-confident and proud of their achievements. They have many opportunities for success, for instance through participation in extra-curricular sporting events.
- Pupils who are potentially vulnerable receive excellent support from a strong pastoral team. Staff care for pupils so that pupils do not fall behind with their learning.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff respond swiftly to any concerns, working with parents and other agencies to make sure that pupils have the support that they need.
- The school's Christian values permeate all aspects of pupils' learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the work of the school.
- A high proportion of children, particularly boys, come into the school with skills that are well below those typical for their age. Boys do less well than girls through the early years and key stage 1 because some need additional challenge and support. However, many boys catch up in key stage 2.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and collaborate well to share good practice.
- Staff have worked together to develop a new curriculum and to plan lessons. However, leaders acknowledge that there is further work needed to ensure that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively across the whole curriculum.
- A review of assessment strategies has provided a sharper focus on pupils' progress. However, teachers do not always use their assessments consistently well to help them to match teaching to pupils' ability, particularly for lower-ability pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase further the proportion of boys who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year so that they are ready to achieve well by the end of key stage 1. Ensure that boys consistently receive the right level of challenge and support so that they excel.
- Enable more pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment information to plan learning activities which are consistently matched to pupils' abilities, particularly for the least able pupils
 - further develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have a clear vision for improvement that is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. They have developed well-structured, highly ambitious school improvement plans.
- Leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the actions that they take to achieve the key actions outlined in the school improvement plan. They analyse the information that they gather to refine and improve systems across the school. All staff contribute to revising further the school improvement plan. Because of this cycle of reflective practice, the school is continuously improving.
- Leaders also support school improvement with high-quality ongoing staff training. Staff are well motivated and work collaboratively, sharing good practice and developing ideas with colleagues. As a result, there is strength in teaching.
- Effective arrangements are in place to assess the performance of all staff. This includes non-teaching staff.
- In 2017, there were big improvements in both key stages 1 and 2 because of the steps taken to remedy the weaknesses identified by leaders. The work seen in pupils' books confirms that current pupils continue to make strong progress. Pupils make good progress because of better teaching and effective leadership and management.
- Leaders have a very good knowledge and understanding of their pupils and their families. The pastoral needs of pupils are provided for well. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' safety. For example, Year 5 pupils visited an event at a local sports stadium to learn about various aspects of safety in their lives. This was so that they could be better equipped to keep themselves safe from the dangers on the internet, in the home and on the road. Pupils learned how to act in an emergency.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly embedded into the whole curriculum across all year groups. There is an active school council. Pupils are taught the value and reasons behind laws, understanding that their behaviours have an impact on their own rights and those of others. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils take part in the annual democracy debate held at the Council Chamber of the Town Hall.
- Leaders and governors carefully plan the spending of the additional funding for physical education and sport. Leaders also use funding particularly well to support disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The effect of this funding is clearly visible, for instance in the high proportion of pupils involved in extra-curricular sporting activities and in the strong progress made by some vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to engage in activities outside the classroom. Extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' development, support academic provision, and contribute significantly to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- There has been a comprehensive review of the school's curriculum. A focus on developing the teaching of reading and writing in 2016/17 has now been

supplemented by a focus on enhancing the teaching of mathematics. Subjects other than English and mathematics are taught through cross-curricular topics. Leaders recognise that there are further opportunities to develop the use and application of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills within the wider curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governors are knowledgeable and effective. They regularly audit the skills of board members. Governors use this information to ensure that members hold roles where they will have the most effect on school improvement. They have a clear picture of leaders' work because of their rigorous training, their regular visits to the school, their links to school leaders and through the information that leaders share with them. Governors hold leaders to account, challenging any underachievement and supporting ongoing school improvement, for instance by enabling smaller class sizes for targeted groups.
- Governors work effectively to oversee the financial management of the school. They deploy staffing and resources effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of vigilance across the school. Regular training and updates ensure that staff have a clear understanding of the safeguarding procedures. There is a relentless focus on keeping children safe.
- Leaders take swift action in response to any concerns raised. They have strong partnerships with parents and other agencies. Leaders report concerns to the appropriate body and they follow up concerns to make sure that pupils have the support that they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and there is an ambition to improve it still further.
- Teachers value their ongoing training, which has helped to develop good classroom practice and a secure knowledge base. They work together to develop the curriculum and to plan lessons that help pupils to learn well.
- Staff use questioning skilfully to check on pupils' understanding and to probe their thinking.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils generally read well, with understanding. There are many initiatives to boost opportunities for pupils to read outside of school, including by encouraging them to borrow books and by presenting pupils with books at key points in the year, for example Christmas.
- New initiatives have been introduced that are having a positive effect on learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils have to explain their reasoning, as well as work out the answers to problems. As staff have the opportunity to work together to develop

these new initiatives, there is consistency in expectations, in planning and in classroom strategies to support learning and progress.

- Where learning is effective, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, reflect on what they already know, practise their skills and apply their new learning to solve problems. As a result, pupils develop a mature approach to learning.
- Teachers have developed a marking and feedback policy that enables them to give rapid guidance to pupils. It includes a range of support strategies to boost pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, after checking work from a mathematics lesson, support may be given to a group of pupils before the next lesson. Some pupils use this feedback to make improvements to their work. However, leaders note that the procedures for pupils to respond to feedback are not yet consistently in line with the school's policy. They plan to work with staff to develop this further.
- Leaders' assessment strategies, which have been developed in response to changes to the national curriculum, have been reviewed to provide fine detail to the school's tracking system. Leaders' refinements have had a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- Teachers regularly check that pupils make sufficient progress. If the progress of an individual pupil slows, teachers put into place activities designed to accelerate it and they check that this occurs. Adults provide appropriate support for pupils who have a wide range of SEN and/or disabilities, as well as other needs. The school's own information shows that carefully targeted support has led to accelerated progress for most of these pupils.
- Although teachers use assessment to find out what pupils know, understand and can do, on some occasions teachers could use this information even more effectively to plan for learning and progress. This is particularly the case for the least able pupils.
- Pupils generally present their work well. However, some pupils take less care with their handwriting.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing the skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Occasionally, pupils' mistakes in key information or the incorrect spelling of key words are not addressed, as the school's policy requires. As a result, errors are repeated.
- Sometimes, because the teacher has allotted too little time, a minority of pupils are unable to finish tasks or apply new learning. This slows their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are actively involved in aspects of the leadership of the school through the school council, the team of collective worship leaders and the team of play leaders.
- Pupils are confident because of the many opportunities for them to achieve success. They understand that the school gives them a good start in life. As a result, they have

positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their school and of their own achievements.

- The pastoral team is very strong. The support that it provides for pupils and their families is central to the school's work and to the community. The school's inclusive and nurturing culture promotes very effectively all aspects of pupils' welfare. Leaders and other adults recognise the needs of potentially vulnerable families and are prepared to take action in the best interest of the pupils.
- Pupils are safe and they say that they feel safe. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it does take place, staff tackle it immediately and effectively.
- Parents are very appreciative of the care and support given by the school to their children. This helps pupils to be resilient, self-confident learners.
- Pupils know how to be safe in school and in their community and they have many opportunities to reflect on this through the work that they do. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be safe online, for example through the work that they do in special assemblies and in class. Leaders also help parents to support their children. This work is supported by newsletters and drop-in sessions for parents.
- Pupils learn very effectively right from wrong and develop the skills of empathy through the carefully structured personal, social and health education programme. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is woven into the curriculum. Pupils learn how to reflect on and be responsible for their actions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well mannered, polite and respectful. They conduct themselves well during the day and move around the school carefully. Little time is lost between activities and in movement between areas.
- Behaviour at break and around the school is good. Children are calm and orderly.
- The school admits some pupils who display challenging behaviour. They settle in well, are safe and their needs are well met.
- Behaviour at lunchtimes and break is well supervised. There are plenty of interesting activities for children to join in with. The staggered lunch arrangements allow for a comfortable flow of pupils through the lunch facilities.
- Pupils' behaviour for learning is good. They behave well in lessons because they are actively engaged and keen to learn. Play leaders and monitors support the smooth running of the school.
- Staff are trained to manage behaviour well and appropriate strategies are in place to support pupils who need extra help to behave acceptably. Records show that there have been marked improvements in the behaviour of those pupils whose behaviour in the past has been less than good.
- Parents are very positive about pupils' behaviour and they know that staff will follow up any matters that they raise quickly.

- Effective systems are in place to address any poor attendance. Overall attendance has improved. However, there is still a small number of pupils who need to improve their attendance. The pastoral team quickly follows up on any absences.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- There has been an improvement in pupils' outcomes over a number of years, although there was a dip in standards in 2016, which coincided with the introduction of the new curriculum and the new national testing system.
- Current pupils make good progress across their subjects.
- A high number of disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and pupils with other needs, receive effective support so that they make good progress with their learning. A high proportion of these pupils are boys. Where leaders put measures into place to support these pupils, such as smaller class sizes and small-group support, good progress is made. For instance, in Year 3, disadvantaged pupils are outperforming others in writing.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who receive intervention support make good progress from their starting points. This is because the support that they receive helps them to achieve well. Most are on track to achieve the targets that they have been set.
- An increasing proportion of the most able pupils make good progress. This can be seen in the school's own information about the proportion of pupils exceeding age-related expectations and in the proportions of pupils achieving higher standards or greater depth in the end of key stage assessments.
- In 2017, there were sizeable improvements to pupils' outcomes in key stage 1. In mathematics, outcomes at the expected standard approached the national average. All subjects at greater depth were in line with the national average.
- The good progress made by pupils from their different starting points has led to a big improvement in pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. As a result, a much higher proportion of pupils were ready for secondary education.
- In 2017, combined reading, writing and mathematics outcomes were in line with the national average. Reading outcomes improved to close to the national average at both the expected and higher standard. The proportion of girls who reached the higher standard was above the national average. Writing at greater depth was in line with the national average for all pupils and above the national average for boys. These outcomes show that the focus on literacy was beginning to have the desired effect.
- Mathematics did not improve as much as reading and writing did in 2017. There has been a review of provision and effective changes have been made so that pupils now make good progress in mathematics. Work seen in pupils' books supports this.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership in the early years is good. Leaders have an accurate picture of provision and outcomes in the early years. They tailor provision well to enable children to make

good progress from their starting points. They recognise that some boys need additional support. Adults ensure that they tailor provision to meet boys' needs and to stimulate their interest.

- Leaders' and staff's assessments of children's skills on entry to the Nursery show that a very high proportion, particularly boys, have skills significantly below those typical for their age. The school caters for a wide range of developmental needs. All children are encouraged to develop skills to support independence.
- Teachers prioritise children's emotional, social and physical development before reading, writing and mathematics. The school's tracking information shows that once these areas of development are more secure, progress then accelerates in other areas of learning.
- Children make good progress from their starting points in both the Nursery and Reception classes because the provision is interesting and varied. Relationships are strong between staff and parents and staff and children. Home circumstances are considered. Staff indicate to parents how they can support their child's learning, including with toileting. The assessments that teachers undertake are comprehensive and relevant. Tasks and activities match children's needs, for instance to encourage social interaction, language development and fine motor control.
- The school's own information shows that children make good progress from low starting points. This is confirmed by evidence in their 'learning journeys'. These 'learning journeys', shared with parents, are comprehensive documents that track an individual child's progress through regular and focused observations and assessment. Next steps are often identified. The recent purchase of a technology-based parental link is further improving communication about how parents can support their child's learning at home.
- Children make rapid progress during their time in Nursery and Reception. In 2017, the proportion of girls who achieved a good level of development was in line with national averages. There was also an improvement in outcomes for boys. The average points score per pupil was very close to the national benchmark. Most children were ready for the key stage 1 curriculum.
- Staff are analytical, reflective and proactive in making changes. There are clear working strategies in place. Staff work well together to determine where further improvements could be made. Adults have high expectations of the children.
- Children take part in a wide range of well-planned learning experiences indoors and in the outdoor area. There are many opportunities to build on basic skills and fine motor control. The curriculum responds to children's interests, for example with a theme of 'superheroes', and provides learning tied to special times of the year such as Halloween. Many children are happy to talk about their learning and are proud of what they have achieved.
- Teaching is good. Staff use language skilfully and develop it to stimulate children's thinking. For example, they talk about what they are doing and why they are doing it, encouraging children to think and to respond. Questioning is used skilfully to assess and to prompt children to think about what they are doing.
- Visitors are invited into the early years to provide special 'topic' sessions and leaders arrange for children go out on visits to broaden their experiences. For example,

children visited the local fire station, finding out about the jobs people do and the equipment that is used.

- There are effective assessment procedures in place. Teachers are involved in testing the accuracy of their assessments of children's development both in the school and with other professionals from different settings, including the local authority. Doing this ensures that assessments are accurate and in line with national standards.
- The school provides well for children who have limited early development, while also providing guidance to parents on how they can help their child's development. Some children are referred to external professional support, for instance speech therapy. However, this support is not always taken up by parents. Leaders are considering how to develop further expertise within the early years team, to support better those children for whom external support is not forthcoming.
- Staff are alert to any safeguarding issues and rigorously follow policies and protocols.
- Children are motivated. Behaviour is good because staff manage children's behaviour well. They encourage good habits in learning from the earliest days. As a result, even those children who have additional needs, who can be challenging, are managed well.

School details

Unique reference number	104791
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10037791

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	343
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mavis Hyland
Headteacher	Iwan Williams
Telephone number	01744 678690
Website	www.suttonoak.co.uk
Email address	iwan.williams@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Sutton Oak is a larger than average-sized primary school. Children attend the nursery either on a part-time or full-time basis.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average. No pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the government's floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors reviewed the comments of 14 parents and 21 staff made through the Ofsted online questionnaires. There were no pupils' responses to the online survey.
- Inspectors observed teaching and carried out learning walks in classes, the school hall and outdoors. Inspectors observed pupils during break and lunchtimes. An inspector attended an assembly.
- Inspectors met regularly with senior leaders, teachers who hold posts of responsibility and a range of other staff throughout the inspection.
- An inspector heard some children read. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, some in classrooms and some during formal work scrutinies.
- The inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils from all age groups in classrooms, during formal meetings and informally around the school site.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about the school, including the school's website, reports about how well the school is doing, school improvement plans and self-evaluation documents. In addition, inspectors scrutinised school policies and records about the care and progress of pupils. Inspectors reviewed documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Linda Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Gill	Ofsted Inspector
James Blackwell	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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