

# Sutton Valence Primary School

North Street, Sutton Valence, Maidstone, Kent ME17 3HT

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher has acted successfully to achieve her vision for the school. She has worked unfalteringly to ensure that pupils are cared for and achieve well, through a period of staff changes.
- Governors provide effective strategic direction and support the headteacher well in her work to improve the school.
- Leaders have successfully improved mathematics teaching and now provide pupils with more opportunities to reason and solve problems.
- Outcomes in the early years and key stage 1 are in line with or better than national figures but pupils do not always build rapidly on this learning as they move into key stage 2.
- Teaching is typically good and is improving quickly. However, there are times when teachers do not match learning activities closely enough to starting points of individual pupils. As a result, pupils with gaps in their knowledge find it difficult to learn well.
- Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to extend their writing, and most take pride in their work. Nevertheless, some pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are not accurate enough.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils have positive relationships with their teachers, which enables them to learn well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good because of the successful systems in place. Pupils know the importance of good manners and are keen to put the school's values into practice. They take responsibility for their good behaviour.
- Provision for children in the early years is good. Children are safe and happy. They enjoy the good range of interesting activities provided.
- New strategies to improve the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are in place but it is too early to measure the impact of this work.

## Full report

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

- Raise achievement by making sure that:
  - teachers focus on accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar
  - mathematics strategies to develop reasoning and problem-solving become embedded
  - the good practice in teaching is shared fully across the school so that pupils make even better progress
  - lesson planning more routinely focuses on meeting the needs of individuals in relation to their starting points
  - the transition into key stage 2 is strengthened so that pupils make rapid gains in learning as they enter Year 3.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher has high aspirations for the school. She has managed the effects of turbulence in staffing well and is determined to raise standards. Her resolute leadership has brought about significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. Her ambition to make sure that all pupils achieve the very best, academically and socially, is shared by all staff.
- The management of teachers' performance is used well to support a drive for continual improvement. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching through regular checking, such as through pupils' progress reviews, visits to classrooms and reviews of written work. This effective monitoring is used to support teaching staff and raise standards across the school.
- Leaders know their school well and have taken well-considered and effective actions to eradicate the previous weaknesses in teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of education has improved. However, in spite of leaders' targeted and precise actions, some Year 6 pupils were not able to catch up sufficiently last year.
- Leaders acknowledge that more work is needed to further improve pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics. Significant progress has already been made throughout the last academic year and is continuing. As a result, the progress of pupils in mathematics and the overall attainment of key stage 2 pupils are improving.
- The school's provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is well led. Systems and procedures are in place to precisely target intervention and monitor its impact. Leaders target pupil premium funding to support the academic, social and emotional needs of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are acting rapidly to address the underperformance of these pupils through a targeted programme of activities which includes work with parents.
- The creative curriculum is enjoyed by all pupils and covers a wide range of topics and learning experiences. Pupils have more opportunities to develop their skills in writing and research. Trips and visitors to the school further enrich pupils' learning. Pupils were enthusiastic about their visits, including the recent science centre trip. They benefit from the ways in which poets and writers inspire them to read and write for enjoyment. Pupils were keen to show how they, as the school's poets in residence, were writing their own book of poems.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. This means that the school is a calm, orderly environment where pupils work and play happily together.
- Sports funding has been used effectively to train teachers. They are now more skilled in teaching specific aspects of the sports curriculum. This has widened pupils' participation in a range of sports which include swimming, ball games and dance. Pupils have an appreciation of the importance of physical activity and actively engage in the additional clubs provided.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective. Governors have provided strong support for the headteacher, especially while she has dealt with difficult staffing issues. This level of support demonstrates leaders' and governors' shared vision that pupils deserve the best teaching possible.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the aspects that could be improved. They have restructured the governing body and committees to make sure that they are effective. Governors make frequent visits to the school to check for themselves the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and development. They attend regular training to ensure that they have the necessary expertise to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
- Governors fulfil their role in making sure that teachers' pay is linked to the achievement of pupils. Governors check that additional funding, for example for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is used effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong safeguarding culture runs throughout the school. Staff receive regular training, which helps them to keep pupils safe from harm. Staff record and pass on concerns quickly. When required, leaders work well with external agencies to protect pupils.
- Leaders and governors ensure that people working in the school are appropriately checked and trained.
- Parents are positive about the culture of safety in the school. Pupils say they feel safe and are taught how to stay safe.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching because they monitor teachers' work and check pupils' progress regularly. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including the school's data, observation of lessons and pupils' work, confirms that teaching, learning and assessment have improved and are now good.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers and teaching assistants, new to the school this September, have appropriate training and mentoring in place to help them get up to speed with the school's agreed policies and practices.
- Leaders' actions to improve progress in mathematics have been effective. Specialist training and new resources have equipped teachers with the skills needed to improve pupils' achievement. Teachers and teaching assistants have acquired greater subject knowledge. Whole-school agreed practices for lesson planning have reduced the variation in teaching. Pupils are given challenges suited to their learning needs. They are developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills well, alongside a knowledge of calculation strategies.

- There has been a renewed emphasis on the teaching of phonics. In the early years and key stage 1, teaching builds on what pupils already know and, through well-focused teaching, pupils learn more rapidly. In key stage 2, pupils who are less confident using phonics are given additional support and, as a result, they catch up rapidly.
- Every opportunity is taken to enrich pupils' knowledge and accurate use of a wide range of vocabulary. This begins with teachers showing pupils how to use language well and questioning pupils carefully. Displays and pupils' resources, such as vocabulary lists and prompts, are used to support writing.
- Pupils edit and improve their work and, as a result, they write with fluency and increasing flair. Corridor challenges promote written responses as pupils move around the school. Whole-class discussion extends pupils' awareness of a range of vocabulary, an example of which was seen in the forest school, where Year 2 pupils had been outdoors smelling herbs and spices. They were asked for different words related to smell and responded with 'aroma, pungent, perfume, essence, fragrance'.
- Nevertheless, despite the school's success in improving pupils' awareness of language, spelling, punctuation and grammar are still not used consistently well.
- New strategies have been introduced to develop pupils' skills in reading, use of reference books and comprehension. Book corners are well positioned in classrooms and pupils have access to both key stage 1 and key stage 2 libraries. Pupils are making good progress in reading. They were able to use a range of techniques, including phonics, when reading to inspectors. Some older pupils who enjoyed English and reading said they would still like to have more opportunities to read with adults in school and they would like a wider range of reading books in the library.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers skilfully question pupils and set tasks to meet individual needs. They adapt their teaching within lessons to address misconceptions and spot pupils who are ready to be moved on. However, not all teachers are equally skilled at this. Leaders know where teaching is strongest and are beginning to use this to further improve teaching and learning across the school.
- Teachers deploy the school's highly skilled teaching assistants effectively. They help pupils to make progress within lessons, they work with pupils outside the classroom individually and they provide same-day intervention when groups of pupils need some extra support. They also help pupils with reading and phonics. Teaching assistants know pupils well and are beginning to have a positive impact on their progress.
- Teachers generally use their knowledge about pupils' capabilities well in order to ensure that they meet their differing needs. Teaching across a wide range of curriculum subjects is typically good. However, at times, teachers do not challenge pupils in the tasks they provide, especially the most able pupils. Sometimes pupils spend too long on tasks which they have already understood, or start with work that does not challenge them sufficiently. This means that they do not always make the rapid progress they could.
- The homework programme supports pupils well in extending their learning. Pupils are encouraged to complete the tasks and are recognised for their efforts. Parents are given information to help them to support their children, and they have access to planned drop-in sessions.
- Although teaching is typically good, some inconsistency remains. There is work to be

done to make sure that the effective practice in many classes is shared fully across the school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have good relationships with adults and very positive attitudes towards their work in school. They participate well in lessons and are keen to discuss their achievements with visitors.
- Pupils learn British values as 'Sutton Valence citizens'. Pupils from different backgrounds, languages and cultures celebrate their differences within this inclusive environment. The values education policy recognises the need to raise the profile of pupils' well-being, resilience and welfare.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in a wide range of clubs, including netball, dance, football, French and board games. Some pupils have suggested additional clubs they would like to lead, and they have been given help and support to do this. Year 6 girls described their lunchtime dance club and were looking forward to their performance.
- Pupils are given opportunities to take a lead and to develop other skills and talents. They look after the school chickens and sell eggs or produce from the school allotment. Other pupils take care of the school environment and libraries. Pupils have a variety of roles and responsibilities, and participate in an active school council.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke to inspectors and/or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe, happy and looked after well.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility, such as by co-writing the school's behaviour policy, which is renewed during anti-bullying week each year. This has led to a credit system which rewards positive acts, including helping others, and promotes better learning. Pupils have agreed the sanctions for negative behaviours and actions. Pupils talk confidently about the positive behaviour systems that are in place in school. They understand these systems and are benefiting from the positive reinforcement and rewards for consistently good behaviour.
- Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually. However, some groups, which include disadvantaged pupils, do not yet attend as often as they should. School leaders work diligently to help them to improve their attendance.
- During the inspection, the vast majority of pupils displayed positive behaviour, both in class and while playing at morning break and lunchtime. Pupils take pride in their achievements and try to improve. Pupils' attention and engagement only waned in

lessons where teaching was less well matched to their abilities.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The 2016/17 results for the Year 6 cohort showed that disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils. The average progress of Year 6 pupils in writing was below the national average. Their attainment in mathematics was well below the national average.
- School leaders and parents have acknowledged the negative impact of past staffing changes on the quality of education in the school. This has led to some older pupils having gaps in their knowledge. The action taken by teachers to address this did not lead to rapid enough improvement last year. The current Year 6 have gaps in their knowledge. Greater precision in planning is required to ensure that all teaching builds rapidly from what pupils already know.
- Pupils, in the past, did not consistently achieve higher standards in all subjects. This has now been addressed through training and support, and teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils now have more opportunities to use mathematics and writing in different contexts. They are now working at greater depth, through extended writing or mathematical reasoning and problem-solving, more often. The performance of most-able pupils is improving.
- In the 2017 key stage 1 assessments, Year 2 pupils achieved outcomes in line with, or better than, national averages for reading, writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 1, well-targeted extra help for disadvantaged pupils is now improving their performance. In key stage 2, a gap remains between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others pupils nationally. Leaders have recognised this and have taken steps to establish a suitable programme of extra help to meet the needs of both disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Progress in phonics is above the national average for the expected standard in the screening check. The school continues to strengthen phonics teaching and has introduced a more systematic approach to key stage 1 teaching. There is additional support in key stage 2 for those who did not pass the screening check. This helps pupils to make better progress in reading. Pupils who join the school mid-year, and those who speak English as an additional language, make rapid progress.
- The number of pupils achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years is above average.
- Work in pupils' books and the school's checks on pupils' learning show that pupils are now making better progress in all subjects and in most year groups. Progress remains variable, however, and is strongest where teaching meets the needs of pupils most effectively. Progress is less secure for pupils as they move from key stage 1 into key stage 2, which results in lower attainment.
- School leaders have rightly focused on improving writing. Pupils have opportunities to write in English and in other subjects. They are learning a wide range of new vocabulary and have developed technical skills. However, pupils do not always use accurate spelling and grammar, which affects the quality of their written work.

## Early years provision

Good

- Leaders evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the early years accurately. They take appropriate action where necessary, which is securing ongoing improvement. The new class teacher is knowledgeable and confident. She works well with school leaders to develop learning in the early years.
- Teaching is good. Adults provide activities, both inside and outside the classroom, that excite and encourage children to be independent. Teaching makes use of what children already know and what they should do to take the next steps in their learning. Adults readily adapt teaching and activities appropriately in response to their observations of learning. As a result, children make good progress and are being well prepared for learning in key stage 1.
- Children have a rich environment in which to learn. The outdoor area has been redesigned to provide a wide range of challenges, supported by well-planned teacher input. There is a strong focus on using vocabulary and developing speaking, listening and writing skills. Additional mathematics training and support have improved the quality and balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed tasks.
- The arrangements for children joining the school are good and this means that almost all children have quickly settled into school routines. Where pupils are nervous or vulnerable, they are well cared for by adults. Most children are confident to speak to adults and are starting to form friendships with each other.
- Children have a carousel of activities in the Reception class which give them opportunities to work towards the full range of early learning goals. Children were seen to be well supported in some of these activities. Where adult support was lacking, some children did not always understand what was required and, as a result, did not choose their resources well.
- Reception children were able to become absorbed and persevere with tasks which they had selected. Children work well together on their own and in groups. They are willing to take turns and share. During the inspection, children were keen to examine leaves and pine cones using a magnifying glass, design a gingerbread house and use outdoor materials with which to build.
- Children who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. As a result, there is little difference between their development and the development of others.
- Children are kept safe and are cared for very well in the early years. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's learning.



## School details

Unique reference number	118314
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10036948

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Mason
Headteacher	Marianne Terry
Telephone number	01622 842 188
Website	<a href="http://www.sutton-valence.kent.sch.uk">www.sutton-valence.kent.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@sutton-valence.kent.sch.uk">headteacher@sutton-valence.kent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11–12 November 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Sutton Valence Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A number of leaders and other staff have joined the school recently and since the last inspection.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is similar to that found in most schools.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of

Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, including some joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to observe learning in the forest school and small-group teaching.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work from all year groups and in different subjects, both during lessons and through a separate work scrutiny.
- Meetings were held with pupils to discuss their learning and gather their views about the school, the curriculum, behaviour, safety and leadership opportunities. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, inclusion manager and other members of staff. Fourteen responses to the staff survey were considered.
- Discussions were held with the chair of the governing body, as well as a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, school improvement planning, information about pupils' learning and progress, and the school's own checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures, including records of checks on the suitability of staff. Behaviour and attendance records were also reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of 58 responses to Parent View, as well as 53 free-text replies. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

## Inspection team

Ann McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Karon Buck

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018