

# Sudell Primary School

Sudell Road, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 3EB

## Inspection dates

21–22 February 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average. This was because pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, had not been supported to make good progress in key stage 2.
- During this time, leaders and governors had not effectively held staff to account for the amount of progress pupils made. Furthermore, arrangements for managing the performance of staff had not been effective.
- Leaders' current plans for improvement are not sharp enough to bring about more rapid improvement. Leaders have not ensured that the impact of new strategies to improve teaching have been carefully checked.
- Not all middle leaders have been supported effectively to improve standards in their areas.
- There are still inconsistencies in the way that teachers use assessment information to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities.
- The most able pupils do not make good progress because teaching does not routinely meet their needs, particularly in key stage 2.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to apply their developing knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teachers do not challenge pupils consistently in mathematics, although teaching in this area has improved.
- Rates of pupil absence remain too high, despite a reduction in the number of pupils who are regularly absent.
- The behaviour of pupils is not consistently good, particularly when teaching is not well matched to their needs. Some pupils do not take pride in their work.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed principal, the executive principal and senior leaders are making substantial improvements.
- Pupils are making faster progress as a result of improved teaching.
- In 2017, pupils made fast progress in writing.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are looked after well. They are polite and well mannered.
- Early years education is effectively led and managed. This enables children to make good progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able, continue to make faster progress in mathematics and reading
  - sharpening assessment procedures so that staff consistently use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do to provide pupils with work that challenges them to make fast progress from their differing starting points
  - applying the school's revised procedures to manage the performance of teachers effectively and systematically
  - providing pupils with further opportunities for problem-solving and the development of reasoning skills in mathematics
  - ensuring that pupils accurately apply their developing skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling to extended independent pieces of writing
  - supporting pupils effectively to answer challenging questions about the texts that they read
  - making sure that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and promote positive attitudes to all aspects of learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that leaders' accurate self-evaluation leads to the establishment of measurable priorities to improve the school
  - ensuring that all middle leaders receive the support they need to have a positive impact on improving teaching and raising standards in their areas
  - closely checking and evaluating the impact of new strategies that have been introduced to help pupils make faster progress
  - further improving rates of pupil attendance
  - ensuring that governors systematically hold leaders to account for the impact of their work on raising standards.
- Further improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that teachers capture pupils' interest by providing them with work that is carefully matched to their needs.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Following the school's opening as an academy in March 2015, leaders did not take appropriate action to address weak teaching. This resulted in pupils making insufficient progress as they moved through the school, and standards of attainment falling well below national averages by the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics.
- The multi-academy trust recognised in 2016 that there was an urgent need to strengthen leadership at all levels. The trust also recognised that external support was needed to improve the quality of assessment, teaching and learning. A newly appointed principal is now in post to oversee the day-to-day running of the school. She works closely alongside the executive principal, who oversees the school's work. These changes are beginning to have a positive impact in many different areas. Teaching is now more effective and, as a result, pupils are making significantly faster progress during the current academic year. However, leaders cannot demonstrate that the impact of their work is good, because there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the rates of progress that different groups of pupils are making throughout the school and across the curriculum.
- Collectively, the new principal, executive principal and senior leaders are creating a culture of high expectations. In a short period of time they have strengthened the school's safeguarding culture and engineered significant improvements to pupils' behaviour. They have also made further improvements to the strong early years provision. These developments are welcomed and appreciated by staff, pupils, parents and carers.
- New leaders have quickly gained a clear and balanced understanding of the school's strengths and developmental priorities. Despite this, there are still weaknesses in leaders' approach to improvement planning which are preventing faster progress being made. In particular, leaders have not ensured that their plans contain ambitious and measurable targets. As a result, it is difficult for leaders and governors to precisely measure the impact of leaders' actions.
- Leaders have also introduced a large number of strategies to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in different areas. They have improved the accuracy of assessment in English and mathematics, and developed the way in which pupils' progress is monitored and tracked. As a result, they can clearly demonstrate that pupils are making much better progress this year. Despite these improvements, leaders have not carefully monitored and evaluated the impact of different strategies to improve teaching and learning. Consequently, leaders are unsure of the precise impact of each strategy they have introduced.
- The principal has greatly improved the range of training opportunities for staff. She has ensured that teachers and middle leaders undertake training that is based on their interests, abilities and the needs of the school. Leaders also work more closely with colleagues from other schools within the multi-academy trust. For example, leaders from one of the secondary schools are helping to improve the teaching of English and mathematics.

- Some middle leaders are becoming increasingly adept at improving standards of teaching in their areas. Leaders with responsibility for improving teaching in English and mathematics have had a clear impact on accelerating the amount of progress that pupils make. Middle leaders with responsibility for other subjects have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced, and well supported by a range of opportunities for enrichment. However, they have not all received the support that is necessary for them to make significant and sustained improvements to teaching and outcomes in their areas.
- Leaders have not effectively monitored the impact of the pupil premium funding until recently. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been well below those of other pupils nationally. However, leaders have recognised this and have introduced a number of strategies to address the needs of disadvantaged pupils. For example, they have employed new staff to work closely with the disadvantaged. Consequently, these pupils are now receiving the support they need to make faster progress.
- The SEN coordinator has established clear procedures to identify the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This group of pupils has not been supported effectively in the past, and their needs have not always been met. As a result, their progress has been well below the national figures for all pupils. Current data indicates that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have started to make quicker progress.
- Leaders use the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport premium effectively to support the development of PE teaching and widen pupils' opportunities to engage in sporting activities.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Enrichment activities, trips, events and extra-curricular clubs complement this. Staff ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is particularly effective. The school therefore prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain.

## **Governance of the school**

- In the past, those responsible for governance have not held leaders to account for the amount of progress made by pupils. Furthermore, governors have not been accurate in their understanding of pupils' progress and attainment. Although governance has been improved recently, governors do not challenge leaders systematically to demonstrate the impact of their actions to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The recent changes to membership of the governing body have greatly strengthened the overall governance of the school. The local governance committee now has members with a strong educational background and experience of governance at a successful school in the multi-academy trust. They are using this experience to help the school in its efforts to improve.
- Governors' minutes of recent meetings show that they now ask challenging questions about different aspects of the school's performance, including leaders' use of the pupil premium. Despite this, their efforts to hold leaders to account are hindered by the absence of measurable targets within the plans to improve the school.
- The nominated governor for safeguarding makes sure that the governing body understands its safeguarding responsibilities and these are carried out well.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that the checks made on staff, governors and visitors are thorough. The designated leaders for safeguarding ensure that all members of staff are up to date with the latest guidance on keeping pupils safe in education.
- Staff are clear on the procedures for reporting any concerns about pupils' welfare. Records are very detailed, well ordered and clearly identify any actions taken. Leaders use these records to support pupils and families effectively. External agencies work with the school where necessary.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Pupils clearly explained how they make sure that they keep themselves safe from bullying and from strangers when they are using the internet. They know which adults to talk to should they have a concern or a worry.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to improve teaching, particularly in reading and mathematics. They have also strengthened systems for assessing what pupils have learned. As a result, teaching is now better planned and it meets pupils' needs more closely. Pupils are therefore no longer making inadequate progress.
- Despite these improvements, the quality of teaching remains variable. Some teachers have quickly and effectively implemented the new approaches that have been introduced by leaders. On the other hand, other teachers are taking longer to ensure that new approaches effectively meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement.
- Leaders have prioritised making improvements to the way that reading is taught and promoted throughout the school. For example, they have introduced a new approach to developing pupils' reading skills which ensures that pupils complete regular comprehension activities and are encouraged to develop a deeper appreciation of the texts that they read. Pupils are encouraged to pose their own questions about what they are reading. Furthermore, teachers are gaining confidence in asking pupils different types of comprehension questions. As a result, the teaching of reading has improved and pupils are making faster progress in this area. Nevertheless, teachers are still not providing pupils with enough opportunities to answer complex questions about the texts that they read. This is impeding the progress of the most able pupils in particular.
- Older pupils are enthusiastic readers and read with fluency and expression. Pupils are able to discuss and talk about what they have read. They identify preferred authors and can state why they choose to read specific books.
- A wide range of small-group interventions help pupils to catch up when additional support is needed. This additional support is having a positive impact on helping some pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, to catch up with their peers. As a result, leaders and staff are becoming increasingly adept at helping those who fall behind, and this is increasing the proportion of pupils who are working at standards that are typical for their age.

- Leaders have introduced many changes that have improved the way that mathematics is taught. In particular, teachers are beginning to prioritise the development of pupils' mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills. This is still at an early stage, however, and is not embedded across all classes within the school.
- Teachers do not consistently use their understanding of what pupils know and can do to provide pupils with work that challenges them to make fast progress from their differing starting points. Consequently, the most able pupils are often asked to complete the same work as pupils of average ability. Where pupils have the opportunity to choose their own level of question, they often choose to complete work that does not challenge them.
- Leaders have also focused on developing pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation. For example, they have introduced daily activities for pupils to develop these aspects of learning. Pupils' work shows that they are beginning to develop a more secure understanding in these important areas. However, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to practise and apply these developing skills to their independent writing in English and across the wider curriculum.
- The teaching of subjects beyond English and mathematics fires pupils' interest and enthusiasm. For example, pupils enjoy learning how to play African drums and using different technologies when learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils are not self-confident and self-assured learners. Too often, they choose lower-level challenges when provided with a choice of task. This is because they often lack confidence and have not developed the ambition and resilience to become effective learners.
- Although some pupils take pride in their work, others do not. As a result, the care with which pupils present their work varies significantly.
- Pupils enjoy making a contribution to the school through their roles as school council and eco team representatives. They say that they value these roles and can explain the importance of representing other pupils. The school council has raised money for charities and is proud of its work in the community.
- Pupils have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders make good use of outside organisations to lead assemblies and focus on personal welfare and safety.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In lessons, pupils follow teachers' instructions and respond positively to requests from staff. However, some pupils become easily distracted because the work is not well

matched to their needs. Sometimes, pupils lose interest because they are set work which is too easy. At other times, pupils lose interest because the work is too difficult for them to complete independently. When this happens, pupils lose concentration and, on occasion, low-level disruption can disrupt the flow of learning.

- Pupils usually play well together during breaktimes, and they do their best to make sure that other pupils join in their games. They particularly enjoy lunchtime play, as the outdoor equipment provided extends opportunities for team games and promotes both fun and exercise.
- Pupils are generally polite and well mannered. The atmosphere around the school is calm and orderly.
- Since the appointment of the new principal, pupils and teachers say that behaviour has greatly improved. Pupils understand that behaviour is a 'choice' and they can clearly explain the consequences of any failure on their part to meet the behaviour expectations the school has set. Equally, there has been a noticeable drop in incidents logged by school staff since the changes to the behaviour policy took effect.
- Attendance has been below the national average for the past two years. However, evidence gathered during the inspection shows that there has been an improvement this academic year, particularly among a group of pupils whose attendance has been a concern in the past. However, leaders' work has not ensured that pupils' attendance is now good. In particular, there are still too many pupils who are regularly absent from school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Over time, pupils have not made good progress from their starting points. This is because teaching has not met their differing needs. There is evidence of improvement this year, as a result of the actions that leaders have taken to address weaknesses in teaching. However, too many pupils are still not making the fast progress that is needed to compensate for the legacy of weaker teaching.
- For the past two years, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics has been well below average by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. School assessment information indicates that more pupils are now working at the expected standards of attainment in reading and mathematics in Year 6.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have made the same slow progress as others in recent years. Consequently, differences in their attainment compared with others nationally have remained wide. There is evidence that these groups are beginning to make faster progress, although too many of these pupils are still not working at standards that are typical for their age.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in key stage 2. This means that pupils do not reach the high standards of which they are capable by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils that attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average in 2017. However, an external review of phonics has led to leaders improving provision, and this is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

- Pupils' progress in writing was well above the national average in 2017 at the end of Year 6. The school took part in the local authority's moderation process for writing at both key stage 1 and key stage 2, and therefore these outcomes were externally validated.
- Pupils' work across other areas of the curriculum provides them with good opportunities to use their skills in different subjects. For example, they make good progress in computing as a result of well-planned opportunities to utilise mobile devices and computers to support learning.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Leadership of the early years is effective. School leaders have carried out focused improvement work, and this has had a positive impact on children's outcomes.
- Standards on entry are below those typical for this age group. During their time in the early years, children make good progress. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development rose significantly in 2017 and was above that of all children nationally.
- The early years environment is bright, engaging and safe. Teachers provide rich language opportunities which support the development of early engagement in writing. Children develop positive relationships with staff and each other, and behave well.
- The teaching of early reading skills in the early years is effective. Children recognise letters and know the sounds that different letter combinations make. They are able to break down words and put together different sounds to enable them to read and write words. They use this in their reading to help them to work out unfamiliar words.
- The standard of children's writing in the Reception class is good. They learn from the initial stage to join their letters and proudly demonstrate how they can do this. They talk enthusiastically about their learning and they are confident as a result of the positive and supportive relationships they enjoy with teachers and other adults.
- The indoor and outdoor learning areas are suitably equipped to support effective learning. The early years curriculum is well matched to children's needs. Teachers design activities with a balance of teacher-directed and free-choice tasks for children, which correspond to their interests and support their learning.
- Parents are making an increased contribution to the assessments of what their child can do. They are actively encouraged to share the ongoing achievements of their child with the school.
- The interim vice-principal leads the early years and has an accurate understanding of the quality of provision. She knows the children well and models effective practice for the other staff. Staff take part in frequent training opportunities that secure continued improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Safeguarding requirements are effectively met. Children are well cared for by staff who prioritise the welfare of each individual child.



## School details

Unique reference number	141838
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10042410

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Claire Aspin
Principal	Helena Lewis
Telephone number	01254 703440
Website	<a href="http://www.sudellprimaryschool.co.uk/">www.sudellprimaryschool.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@sudell.blackburn.sch.uk">office@sudell.blackburn.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Sudell Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below that in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- There is one class in each year group.
- The school does not meet the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club for its pupils.
- The school is part of the Aldridge Education Multi-Academy Trust. The school opened as an academy on 1 March 2015.

- The new principal of the Sudell Primary School took up her post in September 2017.
- There has been considerable change at the school during the past year. A number of new staff have joined the school, and there have been significant changes to leaders' roles and responsibilities.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes at least once. A number of these observations were undertaken jointly with the principal.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with a group of pupils. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and breaktimes, as well as in lessons and around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, the management of teaching and school improvement plans.
- Meetings took place with the executive principal, the principal and leaders from schools in the multi-academy trust who support staff at Sudell Primary School. The lead inspector held a conference call with members of the board of trustees, met with representatives of the local authority and three members of the local governing committee.
- Inspectors took into consideration 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 19 free-text comments from parents. Inspectors met parents at the start of the school day. They considered 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Gaynor Rennie, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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