

Inspection of a good school: Sythwood Primary School

Sythwood, Horsell, Woking, Surrey GU21 3AX

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2021

Outcome

Sythwood Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Sythwood Primary is a friendly school where pupils feel safe and happy. Classrooms are purposeful places for pupils to learn. The school's values of 'Be ready, be safe, be respectful, be your best' are well known and upheld by pupils.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. It is carefully planned so that pupils acquire a breadth of knowledge across a wide range of subjects.

The school is a calm place, and an ethos created by a staff team whose members have high expectations for pupils. Pupils are polite, kind, and helpful to adults and their peers. If there is any disruptive behaviour or bullying, staff deal with it fairly and consistently. The positive relationships that pupils have with staff are helping pupils, including those with SEND, to aim high and achieve well.

Most parents and carers like how the school supports their children to develop their skills and pursue their interests. The school has many extra activities that pupils readily participate in. This includes opportunities that promote pupils' physical health and well-being. The school has been successful in encouraging pupils to engage in a wide range of sports.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Leaders have identified the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn in all subjects. Teachers revisit prior learning to check that pupils remember what they have been taught. Pupils practise important skills before they move on to learn new ideas. Teachers use timely assessments to understand what pupils find hard to remember. This helps staff to plan where pupils may need extra support. However, leaders have identified that some subject leaders need further training to strengthen their knowledge of the areas they lead.

Children learn to read from the beginning of Reception. Teaching reading well is a priority for the school. Children in early years develop early reading skills by learning the sounds that letters represent through songs, games and rhymes. There is a structured and carefully delivered programme to teach phonics. Staff have received training to teach phonics effectively. Teachers make sure that there is a close match between the books that pupils read and the sounds that they learn in lessons. Pupils who need more help with reading are quickly identified. They receive many additional opportunities to read aloud to a member of staff.

Leaders have thought about and researched how to plan pupils' learning in mathematics. Consequently, the mathematics curriculum is sequenced well. Learning is organised so that pupils build on what they already know and can do. Children in early years and the provision for two-year-olds work hard on their number and shape activities. Staff use resources effectively to engage children. For example, scales encourage children to be inquisitive about the weight of different objects. However, there are times when the work set for some pupils does not help them use and apply their ideas in certain subjects. This means that some pupils do not do as well as they should in these areas.

Leaders promote the importance of pupils' personal development. Pupils have purposeful opportunities to learn outdoors and across different activities. This enables pupils to work together and enjoy learning. Pupils talked about the wide choice of after-school clubs. Pupils also benefit from trips to places as such as the zoo and a farm museum, and residential experiences. Visits to places of worship broaden pupils' understanding of different religions. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and live healthy lifestyles.

Leaders are aspirational for pupils with SEND. These pupils are helped to learn to be as independent as possible. Pupils' needs are identified quickly. Teachers work closely with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the leader for pupils with visual impairment. Together they accurately identify the extra help that children in early years and pupils across the school need. This enables pupils to access their learning successfully. Pupils are strongly supported to take part in activities both during and outside the school day. Pupils are given carefully considered support and resources. The school works closely with parents and takes account of their views.

The governing committee and trustees work collectively to oversee the school's development. They show a robust understanding of its strengths and priorities. These leaders make regular checks on the impact of the school's work, including how the school safeguards pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. All staff view keeping pupils safe as their responsibility. They understand their role in identifying pupils at risk of harm and what they should do if they have a concern. Staff training is a high priority.

Leaders have developed secure support systems. These, alongside effective partnership working with other agencies, ensure that families get the right help at the time they need it.

Leaders and governors are trained in the safe recruitment of staff. A careful record of checks made when appointing adults to work at the school is maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders do not have training in their areas of responsibility. This means that they are not able to support teachers with improving some curriculum areas. Leaders need to ensure that all subject leaders develop expertise in the subjects for which they are responsible.
- Teachers do not always plan work for pupils that helps them deepen their knowledge and understanding. As a result, some pupils do not always learn and do as well as they should. Leaders should make sure that teachers plan work for pupils that helps them use and apply their knowledge consistently across all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	140509
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10200177
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	640
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sara Lipscombe
Headteacher	Nicola Matheson
Website	www.sythwood.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- There is a resource base for pupils with visual impairment.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, SENCo, a trustee, four governors and the executive leader from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- In order to judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the relevant school policies and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors interviewed the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors met with school staff to check their understanding of safeguarding and their training. An inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors, to check details of their safeguarding knowledge and training.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted’s Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Clare Morgan

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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