

Inspection of a good school: Sutton Valence Primary School

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

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Sutton Valence Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe in this friendly and welcoming school. They talk about how their kind and respectful teachers have high expectations of both behaviour and learning. Bullying is extremely rare here. Pupils know that staff will help them sort out any problems they may have. The whole school community knows and follows the values of 'courage, friendship, excellence, determination, equality and respect'.

Pupils appreciate how the school gives them ample opportunities to develop their sense of responsibility and their talents and interests. Leaders suggest and compile '100 things to do' for pupils in the school. Pupils relish collecting stickers for the creative, community and adventurous activities that they take part in. They also enjoy the range of clubs on offer, such as chess, rugby and crochet. Pupils readily take on responsibilities, such as the role of peer mediator. They feel that these roles make a positive difference to other pupils.

Pupils' well-being is a high priority for leaders. Pupils are encouraged to understand their feelings and the importance of staying physically and emotionally healthy. They love their time in the 'Earth Class' outside area. Pupils see real value in protecting the environment and connecting with nature. They are proud that their school has won a national award for its ecological work.

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

Leaders have prioritised curriculum development. They have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, right from the start of early years. It is carefully sequenced and allows pupils to build on what they already know. Where appropriate, leaders have woven the local context into the curriculum. They enrich classroom learning with a range of educational trips and visitors. Leaders expect all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to follow the same curriculum and have the same enrichment opportunities. In some subjects, however, leaders have not yet identified what teachers need to teach precisely enough. This means that,

sometimes, teachers do not focus on the exact knowledge that pupils need to learn. This can lead to some pupils not understanding key concepts fully.

Most staff are skilled at adapting activities and resources so that pupils with SEND achieve well. However, some staff do not have strong enough subject or pedagogical knowledge. This means that they sometimes plan activities that do not meet the needs of all pupils. Therefore, some pupils are not clear about what is expected of them, and they do less well.

Staff regularly check what pupils know during lessons. 'What do we know?' tasks at the end of units helpfully consolidate pupils' learning. Broadly speaking, pupils recall their learning well and make links between different subjects. While outcomes in key stage 2 in 2022 were lower than leaders would have hoped, pupils are now achieving at a higher level. This is because leaders carefully monitor how well pupils are doing and provide additional support to those who fall behind.

Children in early years have made a strong start, despite a period of disruption during building repairs. They are well settled into routines and show strong personal, social and communication skills. There are good opportunities for children to develop and practise their mathematical, reading and writing knowledge.

Early reading is a priority for leaders. They have introduced a new phonics programme, which is working well. Leaders have provided training for staff. Leaders know that further training is required as not all staff have strong enough subject knowledge. Children are taught to read from the start of Reception. Teachers quickly spot any pupil struggling to keep up and provide additional, daily support. Pupils enjoy reading, and understand the importance of reading regularly. Their teachers make sure that books are well matched to pupils' phonic knowledge.

Pupils behave well around the school. They are confident, enthusiastic and curious learners, focusing well during lessons. Older pupils act as positive role models. At playtime, they are kind and thoughtful, making sure that all pupils are included. Leaders are determined that all children will have a broad and rich experience that goes beyond classroom learning. Pupils develop their knowledge of citizenship and British values well, for example reaching out to older people in the local community. Pupils have a strong, democratic voice in the school. They know that teachers value their views and opinions.

Leaders engage with staff very well. Staff's well-being is a priority for leaders. Staff are proud and pleased to work here. Governors are committed and know the school well. Parents and carers support the work of the school. One parent, reflecting the view of many, said, 'I couldn't ask for any more from this school.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that they prioritise keeping pupils safe. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They know how to identify any pupils who may be at risk of harm.

Staff report all concerns, however small, promptly. Leaders deal with these effectively. They work well with external partners, securing support for pupils and their families as appropriate. Recruitment checks are timely and thorough. Leaders have ensured that staff are aware of how to raise a concern about an adult. The curriculum teaches pupils about possible risks, including online. Pupils know where to get help should they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified what teachers need to teach with enough precision. As a result, not all pupils build accurate knowledge consistently well across all subjects. Leaders should strengthen and refine the curriculum further so that pupils achieve well across all subjects.
- A few staff do not have strong enough subject and pedagogical knowledge. This means that they sometimes plan activities that do not meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders should ensure that staff receive training to strengthen their subject knowledge and further develop their understanding of the most effective ways to deliver the curriculum.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2017.

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.

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	118314
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256506
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Riddell
Headteacher	Marianne Terry
Website	www.sutton-valence.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was in post during the previous inspection.
- The headteacher works part time. The deputy headteacher assumes the role of acting headteacher when the headteacher is not in school.
- The school runs before- and after-school clubs.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders, the local authority adviser and members of the governing body.
- The inspector undertook deep dives in the following subjects: reading, science and geography. She met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. The inspector visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

- The inspector spoke to leaders about curriculum development in personal, social and health education, and about wider personal development.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector considered how well the school manages safer recruitment and how it manages allegations against adults.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings. She also reviewed external reports.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their learning, what behaviour is like in the school and whether they feel safe.
- The inspector considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. She also considered the 20 staff survey responses. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023