



# Sutton Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109626  
**Local Authority** BEDFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 288456  
**Inspection dates** 7–8 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ruth Frith

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	High Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Sutton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9		Bedfordshire SG19 2NE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01767 260334
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	58	<b>Fax number</b>	01767 260334
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Thornton
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan Gainley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small school with three classes, two of which have children from more than one year group. Pupils come from both the village of Sutton and the surrounding area. The socio-economic background of pupils is mixed but generally favourable. The pupils' attainment on entry to school varies quite considerably year on year. It is frequently average but sometimes below. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average overall but in some year groups it is high. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average. Nearly all pupils come from White British backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where the excellent care for each individual child lies at the heart of its work. Pupils flourish within this friendly and supportive environment and reach standards that are usually at least above average and frequently even higher. When asked how the school could be improved, the comments from children reflect how much they like the school. For example, 'We could make the school bigger so that we could ask more children in to have our good education and have fun'. Through the stimulating school ethos and strong sense of community, pupils develop into sensitive, caring learners and are very well prepared for their next stage of schooling and beyond.

Major improvements have been made to the Foundation Stage curriculum, its teaching and resources since the last inspection and quality and standards are now excellent in this age group. Clear procedures are established and learning is fun, so children quickly settle in Reception. Staff in the rest of the school build well on these high standards and pupils achieve exceptionally well throughout. Teaching is frequently outstanding, particularly in the way that pupils' individual needs are met. This results in pupils from all groups making excellent progress in their learning.

The curriculum is stimulating, thereby making pupils very enthusiastic, exceptionally well behaved and very keen to learn. Work has begun on reviewing the curriculum in the light of recent national guidance and staff are now in a position to adapt activities to ensure that pupils achieve very well in all subjects. Music has a high profile within the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Because they are encouraged to take on responsibilities and express their opinions, they grow in confidence. Pupils contribute particularly well through the school council and are able to make positive changes, for example, to the organisation at lunchtime. Because the care, support and guidance of pupils are exceptionally good, they are aware of how to improve their work and do better in lessons. Pupils also know how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

The success of the school arises from exceptionally good leadership and management, including good governance. The headteacher is particularly effective in creating a body of staff who share her vision for the school and are fully committed to the pupils in their care. Staff morale is very high. The school's exceptionally good self-evaluation procedures have helped it to reflect on how well it is doing and what it needs to do to improve, although some of its judgements of how good it is are rather modest. This is because staff are constantly trying to improve and go one step further. The school provides exceptionally good value for money and has a very good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Work on the good start made in reviewing the curriculum and develop planning in subjects other than English, mathematics and science so that pupils achieve at the same high levels in all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

From generally average starting points, children make exceptionally good progress in Reception so that by the time they enter Year 1, many have exceeded the goals set nationally for children of this age. This rate of progress continues throughout Key Stage 1 so that in the national assessments in Year 2, pupils usually achieve at least above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science and frequently reach high standards. Results in 2006 were an exception and reflect the very high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties within this group. Although they achieved very well for their capabilities, pupils were unable to reach the standards expected for their age and overall standards were slightly below average. Pupils in the current Year 2, who are the first to have benefited from the improved Foundation Stage, are working at high levels and achieving particularly well. Pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) continue to achieve very well and maintain at least above average standards. Pupils from all backgrounds and of all capabilities do equally well. Throughout the school pupils also achieve particularly well in their musical performances either when singing or playing an instrument and standards are above those usually seen for children of this age.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The strong school ethos, together with support from families, governors and the local community, create an environment where children feel happy and do particularly well. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as seen in their good attendance, and develop very positive attitudes to learning. They arrive in the morning keen to start the day. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high standard. They develop a keen spiritual awareness through many areas of study, including art, music and religious education. These activities also support their cultural development particularly well. Pupils behave exceptionally well and develop very good relationships because staff expectations are high and clear standards are set through their own practice. Older pupils readily care for those that are younger. Pupils are encouraged to keep themselves safe and happy through, for example, learning to swim and developing personal safety awareness. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and eating a range of good food. Exceptional links with the local community have a very good impact on pupils' personal development, for example through links with the church, their performances and charity events.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers are very clear about what they want the pupils to learn in each lesson and plan work which systematically builds on previous learning. The ratio of adults to pupils is good which helps the school to meet individual learning needs. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils' progress and achievements to plan work which matches pupils' capabilities and ensures that all are challenged particularly well. Teachers and support staff work very well together to ensure that all pupils, including those who find learning difficult, achieve as well as they can. Staff have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils respond well to these because of the excellent relationships in the school. A wide range of teaching methods is used and, in particular, teachers are making very effective use of computers and computerised whiteboards to make learning more interesting.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. In many lessons there is a buzz of excitement and activity as pupils set about their work. Most really enjoy what they are doing because activities are interesting. The youngest children take part in a good range of activities and links with pre-school groups are well established. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the school is currently reviewing all areas of the curriculum to bring them to the highest possible standards. Provision for the teaching of French is well established and the music curriculum is of a high standard. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of educational visits and knowledgeable visitors and there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities for a school of this size.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The quality of care provided by the school is outstanding. Staff offer very good support which focuses on developing pupils' confidence and responsibility. Very effective procedures are used to check how well they are learning and whether they need additional support. Targets in literacy and numeracy help the children to build on their existing strengths and show them what they need to do to improve. All the required procedures to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are in place and regularly reviewed. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they have a problem. Parents and their children are rightly delighted with what the school offers. As one parent commented, 'We could not have wished for a better beginning to our child's education'.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction for the school based on the continued improvement of provision and the drive for high standards. In spite of her teaching commitment, she regularly checks the school's work and knows precisely where improvements are needed. Staff successfully take on a variety of management responsibilities as duties are well allocated and staff strengths recognised. This results in exceptional care for pupils, a stimulating curriculum and high personal and academic standards. Exceptionally good teamwork is evident, and recognised by the school's Investors in People award. A particularly good development is the way in which the school's key documents, such as the school improvement plan, the self-evaluation form and headteacher's reports all follow a similar format so that effective monitoring and evaluation can more easily be achieved. The chair of governors has a very clear understanding of the school's effectiveness and leads the governing body well. Governors check that standards are maintained and improvements are completed.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 November 2006

Dear Children

Sutton Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School, High Street, Sutton, Bedfordshire, SG19 2NE

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the work you have done. I was very pleased to hear that you enjoy school and find learning fun. I think your school is one of the best and have listed below some of the things I particularly like.

- You work very hard and do particularly well in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Your singing is very good and I was very pleased to find out that so many of you are learning to play a musical instrument.
- Those of you in Reception settle very well in school due to the interesting things that you do. I was very impressed with how much some of you knew about dinosaurs and also how good the bread was that you made.
- All the staff work together very well as a team and they enjoy teaching you. Teaching is often excellent and helps to keep you interested in learning.
- You behave exceptionally well, look after each other and work and play together very well.
- The school council works hard to make sure that any issues that are raised are treated seriously.
- The activities you do are interesting and this makes learning fun.
- Staff look after you extremely well and you feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you would go to a member of staff if you had problems.

Mrs Gainley manages the school very well and she is well supported by all staff and governors. We have agreed that your learning will get even better if they look at the curriculum to try to improve it so that you achieve as well in all subjects.

I left the school feeling very confident that it will continue to improve. I wish you well in the future. Good luck with learning all those new songs for the Christmas performance.

Ruth Frith

Inspector