



Sevenoaks Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118551
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291166
Inspection date 18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bradbourne Park Road
School category	Community		Sevenoaks
Age range of pupils	4-11		TN13 3LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 453952
Number on roll (school)	384	Fax number	01732 464660
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Philip Williams
		Headteacher	Alan Duffey
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is larger than usual primary school. Pupils who start at the school come with a wide variation in their abilities. A significant percentage have ability levels below those typical for their age, particularly in their social development. Over a third of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is higher than usual; in the group of pupils who left school in July 2006, the proportion was nearer half. The pupils are mainly of White British heritage, although approximately 10% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sevenoaks Primary is a good school. It has some excellent features and is close to being outstanding. The pupils really like the atmosphere and the opportunities it provides for them. As one older pupil said, 'I never want to leave'. The care shown to pupils is excellent and because of this they feel very secure. They know their contributions are valued and their worries addressed. High expectations of all staff also contribute to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. This promotes their excellent standards of behaviour and very good social skills. Pupils apply the principles of staying healthy by eating sensibly, exercising at playtimes, and by taking part in the high number of sporting, dance or drama clubs.

Leadership and management are good. The very high expectations and drive of the senior staff have brought about improvement to pupils' achievement, Foundation Stage provision and the quality of education being provided. The pupils now achieve well throughout the school. The Foundation Stage provision is good and pupils make a confident start to school life. In Years 1 and 2, pupils reach the expected standards, which is also an improvement. Pupils continue to make good progress, due to the good teaching throughout the school. A focus on using drama and discussion to enliven their writing is beginning to work. However, lower attaining pupils are not confident enough speakers and in some activities, teachers do not give enough time for pupils to speak at length or depth. Nevertheless, lessons are enjoyable, interesting and motivate pupils to learn. The school focus to improve writing has partly worked, but pupils' ability to write their ideas out logically or creatively is weak. The excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) ensures they make very good progress. Pupils readily commend their teachers and helpers for making subjects fun, and appreciate that many of them help run the very high number of extra-curricular clubs. The width, breadth and increasingly creative aspects of the effective curriculum help them reach above average standards in their work by the time they leave.

The governors support the school well. Their influence has been more effective in improving the premises and by supporting staff than in challenging the school to fully implement its curriculum changes or being aware of further improvements the school is tackling. They recognise this and are beginning to be more aware. They ensure that pupils are taught in a safe, positive environment which assists them to achieve well, grow in confidence and be well prepared for the future. As one parent commented, 'My older child moved on to secondary school happy, confident and motivated to learn.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing in Years 1 to 6 by helping them to sequence their thoughts and write with more creativity.
- Improve the speaking ability of lower attaining pupils by giving them more opportunities to use their skills.

- Improve the governors' monitoring by including a sharper focus on school priorities such as the curriculum, developing writing and improving pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, standards have risen in Years 1 and 2 and are above average by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Pupils listen effectively and achieve well in their work, particularly in mathematics and computer skills; in aspects of their writing and speaking skills some pupils do not achieve as well. By the end of the Reception Year, pupils reach the expected levels in the areas recommended nationally. Years 1 to 6 pupils' good achievement is reflected in national test results over the past two years. In the latest tests the results dipped, due to the high proportion of pupils with LDD in Year 6 who, despite making very good progress in their own right, unduly affected the overall result. Some variations in results between boys and girls remain, but these are reducing and few differences were seen in their day-to-day work. Pupils' good progress is also shown in their success at achieving their set targets. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve well due to well targeted support from staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships amongst the whole school community help pupils to become confident and well motivated learners. Pupils have exceedingly positive attitudes to everything they do and describe their school in glowing terms. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and contributes significantly to the happy atmosphere. Pupils learn and play very well together due to the good spiritual, social, moral and cultural development promoted by the school. They work very harmoniously with pupils from varied cultural backgrounds, although pupils' understanding of other cultures is a weaker aspect of their knowledge. Pupils' adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. They try to eat sensibly and most take part in playtime and extra-curricular clubs for exercise. Pupils enjoy their well developed school council roles and the influence the council has. Others like helping give out play equipment at lunchtime. They have a highly developed awareness of helping others in the community and by fund raising for worthy causes. Pupils are very well prepared for the future through their positive learning experiences, gaining good information and communication technology (ICT) skills, basic skills in most subjects and also by learning foreign languages.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Typically lessons are lively and interesting, enjoyed by pupils and are key factors in the good progress they make. Teachers plan activities well so learning is systematic

and fun. Teachers promote pupils' skills well in ICT and also use technology very well to enliven their own teaching. Pupils with LDD are closely monitored and activities are planned carefully to their needs. Staff use resources effectively and help make learning real, for example, through visits to coastal locations in their geographic work. Children in the Reception classes develop their independence well as they are encouraged to choose their own activities and then review what they do. Good practices in teaching are shared well leading to an even quality of teaching across the school and an improved picture since the last inspection. Weaker elements though include teachers not always allowing enough time for some pupils to answer at length, which hampers development of their speaking skills, particularly for the lower attaining pupils. Teachers assess pupils' progress carefully, and marking in key subjects such as English is effective. In some subjects such as geography and history, although regular, it is sometimes too brief to be helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A wide range of interesting activities is matched effectively to the needs of most pupils to enable them to make good progress. Activities include thinking skills to help pupils make decisions and additional subjects such as modern foreign languages. Pupils' learning in the Reception classes is interesting and focuses on basic skills well. Changes to improve pupils' writing are beginning to succeed. For example, drama work helps pupils think through ideas and encourage them to write with more enthusiasm. However, these approaches are just beginning and are not yet fully effective through the school. The recent focus on planning a more creative curriculum is beginning to work, although it is not yet sufficiently developed within all subjects. Pupils' work in lessons is enriched by an excellent range of out of school clubs. These range from sports clubs to aide their healthy lifestyles to film and drama clubs. Visits to coastal locations for geography help enliven class activities. A high number of visitors talk on a range of relevant topics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are very knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and make great efforts to meet them. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are exemplary and well known by all staff. The school works very closely and extremely effectively with outside agencies to help vulnerable pupils and families receive additional support. Links with parents are very productive and help staff to pinpoint difficulties. They praise highly the work done by staff to support their children and acknowledge that this contributes significantly to the good progress they make. Pupils feel very safe because they know adults act quickly on their worries. They have very frequent opportunities to discuss their targets and progress with teachers and pupils say that they always help them with their work. The confidence that this gives them results in a school full of happy, secure children who really like learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The happy, caring atmosphere created within the school, along with a very determined drive for improvement, leads to pupils and parents having confidence in the school. The very clear vision that senior staff have for the school has helped raise standards in Years 1 and 2 and reduce differences in results between boys and girls in national tests. The high quality support given to pupils with LDD has also been maintained effectively. Governors generally support the school well and this has been most noticeable in aiding improvements to the premises and by helping with changes to staffing structures. It has not been adequately directed in moving the school forward in its day-to-day curriculum planning or monitoring the progress of priorities to improving pupils' learning. They recognise this is an area to extend. The senior staff diagnose the most important weaknesses to remedy and have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. All staff work very well together to help move school forward and improve. The school seeks the views of others well, such as advisers, and regularly seeks the opinions of parents. For example, some asked if resources could be improved for the youngest pupils. The school had already recognised the need and agreed to provide extra equipment. The headteacher and staff have a systematic programme of checking progress and to enable further improvement. As one parent noted, 'The school is restless in pursuing a great and varied education for my children.'

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I inspected your school. I enjoyed looking around and seeing all the exciting things you do. Here are the main things I found out:

- I think that you all work hard to make Sevenoaks Primary a good school and it is close to being outstanding.....so keep working hard!
- You reach above average standards of work for your ages and you make good progress in your work because the teaching is good.
- You feel safe because the school cares and supports you extremely well.
- You all behave and develop really well, especially in lessons, but around the school too.
- Those of you in the Reception class settle in quickly even if you feel a bit scared at first.
- Your parents or carers agree with me that leadership and management are good.
- You are sensitive to others, know right from wrong and know about the surroundings where you live.
- Those of you who need lots of extra help with your work make excellent progress because teachers and their helpers are good at knowing how to help you.
- Your curriculum is good, especially the sporting, language and musical activities you do.

I have asked the school to look at these things to improve:

- Help you make your writing even more exciting and better organised.
- Help those of you who are less confident, to talk for a bit longer and more clearly especially in front of your friends.
- Ask the governors to get to know what you are doing around school a bit more often so they know how to help the staff make your school even better.