

# Little Sutton Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103388
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308302
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Field

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	419
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Guest
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Davis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 April 2003
<b>School address</b>	Worcester Lane Sutton Coldfield B75 5NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 644494
<b>Fax number</b>	01213 232045

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Most of the pupils who attend the school live locally in an area of social advantage and are of White British heritage. However, about a sixth of pupils are from different black minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Indian. A number of pupils speak English as a second language but no one is at an early stage of learning English. Far fewer pupils than seen nationally are entitled to free school meals. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties.

The school has been accredited with Investors in People, the Healthy School Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark, FA Charter Standard and Artsmark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with a good quality education that includes some outstanding features. A first-rate curriculum that is rich and exciting contributes significantly to pupils' sheer enjoyment in learning and excellent personal development. Very effective links with a local cluster of schools further extend opportunities, for example, in enabling pupils to learn at least one modern foreign language from Reception onwards. The school's creative arts programme is exceptional and provides high quality experiences for pupils to try. Parents praise highly the rounded education their children receive. Pupils are very proud of their school. In the words of one pupil, 'Little Sutton is just magic!'

Teaching is good and enables the pupils to learn successfully and develop good basic skills. Classrooms are exciting places and pupils work with enthusiasm and high levels of interest because the work is well-matched to their needs. While there is some very good practice in marking that identifies pupils' next steps, this is not yet consistent in all year groups or across subjects.

Pupils achieve well academically over their time in school and reach well above-average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. The results in the 2007 national tests for Year 6 pupils showed a dip in English at the higher Level 5. The school has been working effectively to target more pupils to achieve Level 5, particularly in writing. Observations in lessons and the work in pupils' books show the more able writers produce exciting and creative pieces that include good use of grammar and punctuation. Handwriting is usually neat; however, presentation and spellings are aspects that could stand closer attention in some pockets of the school.

Pastoral care positively supports pupils in building super relationships with one another in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. The excellent attention given by all staff to nurturing and valuing pupils' individual qualities is clearly reflected in their exemplary behaviour, high-level awareness of how to keep healthy and outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The celebration of different cultures and lifestyles are distinct features of the school's highly inclusive ethos and strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. Academic guidance includes target setting as a developing area, with a new approach currently being embedded. Challenging targets are in place to support pupils' achievement. However, these are not yet being used consistently to promote the best rate of progress for all pupils in lessons.

Strong and well-focused leadership by the headteacher has kept the school moving forward with clear purpose since its last inspection. Teamwork is a significant strength that results in everyone pulling in the same direction. The school knows itself well and none of the inspection judgements come as a surprise because of the rigour in the school's own monitoring. Governors are supportive and critical friends of the school who seek best value in all decision making. The school is striving for excellence and the support and challenge from senior leaders is building good capacity towards this.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children start in Reception with levels of attainment above those expected for their age, particularly in social development, communication, language and literacy skills. The carefully organised induction process, involving parents, makes sure that children settle happily and

make a good start. Teaching is effective, with activities matched well to the children's personal needs, and this supports their good progress. Staff ensure that children understand and can explain what they are doing, prompting them with well focused suggestions and ensuring that they benefit from many opportunities to learn independently. Children feel secure and safe in the calm environment, work from a good curriculum and are guided to eat healthily and keep physically fit. The newly developed outdoor environment gives children free-flowing access to a range of exciting resources and activities and contributes significantly to all areas of their learning. There are effective systems in place to evaluate children's learning. The Foundation Stage leader has identified the need for further monitoring of the children's work as part of the 'assessment for learning' developments.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Sharpen teachers' tracking of pupils' progress in lessons and ensure that individual targets are used to assist all pupils to work at a consistently good or better pace.
- Make sure that marking always helps pupils to understand how well they are learning and what they need to do next to improve.
- Check that the spelling policy is implemented consistently and insist that all work presented is aimed at being the quality of the very best.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

From their starting points, boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds achieve well and attain well above average standards. They typically attain higher standards in Years 2 and 6 than their counterparts nationally, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language. Last year, standards dipped in the national tests in English in Year 6. The school has taken effective action to pinpoint the problems and improve pupils' writing, giving particular attention to extending the skills of the more able writers. The 'Big Writing' initiative is proving particularly successful in this respect. More able pupils in Year 5, for example, have produced some high quality work in their re-telling of the short animation entitled 'The Piano'. Around 50% of Year 6 pupils are on track to reach Level 5 in the May national test, which is a significant uplift on 2007 results.

The school's concerted drive to promote writing across the curriculum is developing well. However, the accuracy of spellings and neat presentation seen in English books is not always present in some subjects because expectations are not yet sufficiently consistent.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils have outstanding personal development and leave the school as very confident, highly articulate, very well-mannered and sensible young people. Relationships are racially harmonious, with absolute consideration shown for one another. Older pupils are excellent role models, with, for example, all Reception children benefiting from having a Year 6 'buddy' who is there to look out for them and show them the ropes. The words of one four-year-old sum up the value: 'I like Buddy Day because it's exciting; I play games with my buddy and its fun!' Pupils make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school and take seriously their responsibilities as monitors and school counsellors.

Pupils have good attendance and really enjoy school because they are kept so busy and active with such an interesting range of opportunities. Pupils know they all have talents and skills and are encouraged by staff to do their best and try hard, which they do. By the time they are ready to move on to the next stage of education, pupils are well prepared, with good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills further enhancing their ability to meet new challenges and opportunities with confidence. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and of the importance of a good diet and regular exercise. Most love the early morning 'Wake Up Shake Up' that gets their day off to an exciting and upbeat start. Their understanding of safety is strong, although they are not yet involved in helping to assess risks around school, which they could easily be.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils learn successfully and make good progress because they are well taught. Interesting and exciting lessons engage pupils' sustained effort and enjoyment. All teachers use ICT very effectively to support learning. The best lessons are a buzz of activity, for example, when Year 6 researched and presented an amazing amount of information about India in only 30 minutes. Sometimes, over directed activities limit the opportunities for pupils to show personal initiative. Occasionally, the progress of the more able loses pace when the pupils are not given precise enough instructions about the amount of work to complete and the standard expected when working on an independent task. The school has rightly identified the need to focus on challenging the more able as a priority in its current action plan. The input of teaching assistants is highly effective in assisting group work, particularly in their support for pupils with learning difficulties. However their deployment at the start and close of lessons could be maximised more fully. Marking is variable; at its very best it is both encouraging and stringent as it draws on pupils' personal targets to help them see how to move forward next time.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding curriculum is underpinned by a constant drive for improvement and concern to get the best out of each individual. Careful adjustments are made to enable pupils with learning difficulties to progress, as well as to challenge and engage gifted and talented pupils. The school has taken effective action to adapt and strengthen provision where it has identified the need to improve progress, such as in pupils' writing across the curriculum. The emphasis placed on cross-curricular links helps pupils to capitalise on their experiences, for example, through well planned topics that include historical research, creative writing and artwork. Curriculum enrichment activities cover a huge range, extended greatly by visiting musicians, artists in residence and staff from specialist partner secondary schools who provide expertise in modern foreign languages, dance and sport. Display around the school is of very high quality and includes some stunning artwork created by the pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good pastoral care and excellent relationships are key features in assisting the pupils' good achievement. All staff are committed to ensuring high standards of care and welfare, including

health and safety of all pupils, which follows latest good practice guidelines. Anti-bullying and anti-racism policies are reviewed regularly and any incidents, however slight, are recorded and dealt with immediately. Pupils are treated equally and fairly and different groups of pupils achieve well. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust. The school works hard to make sure that pupils who find learning more difficult are assisted by being given work from tailor-made programmes with precise targets that are reviewed regularly and support their good progress. However, the guidance given to support other pupils' academic progress is not yet as comprehensive.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has high expectations for the quality of education and has established a very positive climate in which staff are reflective about their personal effectiveness and willing to make changes in the best interests of all pupils. The ethos is inclusive, with a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. Everyone plays a full role in monitoring and is well focused on where improvement is needed and where it lies. Senior leaders are implementing a 'coaching model' that enables staff to work alongside one another to iron out any wrinkles, fine tune specific teaching skills and promote best practice. The review and use of assessment data has been rightly identified as a priority for whole school attention. The leadership structure works well with phase leaders having management oversight of two year groups and curriculum teams comprising a cross-section of staff leading subject development. Governors have reviewed their own work and have established an action plan to guide future development. The school fosters exceptionally good links with its community, outside agencies and other schools to the significant benefit of pupils' education.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Sutton Primary School , Sutton Coldfield, B74 5NL

Thank you very much for being such good ambassadors for your school when the inspectors came to visit you. We loved having lunch with you and I felt very honoured to be invited to sit at the 'gold table' – what lovely manners you have! It was very pleasing to see the healthy meal choices you make. One boy told us he had chosen fish because it is 'brain-food'. How sensible! Everyone we spoke to said how much they enjoyed coming to school, that it was happy and friendly and helped them learn many new and exciting things. We agree you do go to a good school. Here are some of the other things we found that we would like to share with you:

- Teachers make your lessons interesting and you work hard to achieve as much as you can and reach good standards.
- From Reception to Year 6, your behaviour is excellent and you get on with one another incredibly well.
- The curriculum you experience is rich and exciting, with some superb links with the local community, visitors and other schools enabling you develop personal interests in art, music, drama, sports, languages... the list goes on.
- You are very well looked after by caring staff who do their best to respond to any worries you have, and this makes you feel safe.
- The headteacher makes sure your school provides you with a good education; the senior team, staff and governors help her in this and I know that your parents appreciate this because they told me so in the questionnaires they returned.

We have identified three things that the school could improve to make things even better:

- Talk to you about your progress in lessons, especially when you work independently, to ensure that you do as much as you can at the level expected.
- Make sure that marking helps you to understand how to improve your work and see how well you are doing.
- Check that you are spelling key words correctly and encourage you to make sure your work is always presented as neatly as can be.

We wish you the very best of luck for the future,

With kind regards,

Christine Field Lead inspector