

Sutton Green Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 111103 |
| Local Authority | Cheshire |
| Inspection number | 310500 |
| Inspection dates | 6–7 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Colin Smith |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 259 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Steve Jones |
| Headteacher | Mr M Forber |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 March 2004 |
| School address | Armthorpe Drive Little Sutton Ellesmere Port Merseyside CH66 4NW |
| Telephone number | 0151 3394604 |
| Fax number | 0151 3481401 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than average in size. It serves a mixed community, although the proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement in mathematics and teaching and learning.

The quality of education the school provides has slipped since the previous inspection: standards overall are not as high and pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 has fallen to unacceptably low levels in mathematics. Although standards are above average in English and science, standards in mathematics are below average by the end of the Year 6. The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall. This is because, although teaching is secure in most classes, in some, there are major weaknesses in the teaching which impair pupils' learning.

The headteacher is making strenuous efforts to reverse the school's decline since the last inspection. Much is being done to improve the use of assessment. This is helping senior staff to track pupils' progress and to provide 'catch up' programmes which are already proving effective in Years 5 and 6. Teachers are being expected to provide challenging work at just the right level to match pupils' different learning needs. Some teachers are already doing this. However, pupils are capable of achieving more in mathematics than some teachers realise. The curriculum is satisfactory and becoming increasingly effective for pupils who find learning difficult. However, in mathematics there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning skills through investigating and problem solving, which hinders their progress in the subject.

The school cares well and provides good support, particularly for the most needy pupils. The pupils say, 'Staff really care about us and keep us safe.' Pastoral guidance is good but academic guidance lacks clarity. The marking of pupils' work and setting targets for improvement are not firmly established in all classes and so pupils are unsure of what they need to do to improve. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Their behaviour and attendance are good. However, where teaching is weaker, some pupils are passive and lack interest. A minority of parents have justifiably expressed concerns about their children's progress, particularly in lower Key Stage 2. Pupils welcome opportunities to share in decision making. Parents are largely appreciative and supportive of the school. Comments such as, 'children are happy' and 'teachers are caring and approachable', typify most parents' views.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. In investigating and evaluating the work of the school, senior staff and governors have gained an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses and are united in their determination to raise achievement. Subject leaders are helping but they are very reliant on direction from senior staff on how to make the necessary changes. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate and positive action is now being taken to remedy the weaknesses in teaching and pupils' achievement. This is why, although there is much to do, the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Many children enter school with knowledge and skills above those expected for their age, although in some years their attainment on entry is typical for their age. By the end of the

Reception year many are working at levels above those expected for their age: their achievement is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Effective teaching of small groups improves children's literacy and numeracy skills. Day-to day assessments are used to plan the next steps in children's learning. However, insufficient opportunities are given for children to explore and learn for themselves, particularly outdoors. This restricts their physical and creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Leaders ensure that children are safe and well cared for and involve parents from the outset. As a result, many aspects of children's personal development are good. Children quickly settle into routines, are happy and behave well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Substantially improve teaching so that all pupils learn rapidly.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that subject leaders play a full part in improving their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' attainment is above average when they enter Year 1 and leave Year 2. Achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils underachieve in Key Stage 2 because their progress is inconsistent year-on-year. Although achievement in English and science is broadly satisfactory by the end of Year 6, achievement in mathematics is poor. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make better progress than the more able ones because the work provided more closely matches their needs. The school has begun to address pupils' underachievement in mathematics through extra teaching but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their good grasp of cultural diversity reflects the links with schools overseas. Most pupils enjoy school. They appreciate the additional activities, such as clubs and visits, and are eager learners when teaching is lively and topics are interesting. Pupils' behaviour is mostly good and attendance is above average. Pupils have good awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They understand why smoking and alcohol should be avoided, though they are less knowledgeable about the dangers of drugs. They respond well in their roles as playground helpers and school councillors. Pupils present their work carefully and work cooperatively. Despite weaknesses in numeracy and problem solving, pupils' basic skills including secure knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them adequately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Inadequacies in teaching and learning are the main reason why pupils underachieve. Teaching is mostly satisfactory and there are some examples of good teaching where lessons are stimulating, challenging and result in brisk learning. Where mathematics teaching is most

successful, pupils' misconceptions are pinpointed and remedied and they achieve well, but this is not always the case. A strong feature of teaching is the good quality additional support provided for pupils who need to catch up and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In most classes, the atmosphere for learning in lessons is good and pupils give of their best. In other lessons, pupils are not as well managed or appropriately challenged. Consequently, they become distracted and their learning suffers. In most classes, the quality of work in pupils' books shows improvement over the year. Teachers are getting better at providing work that is more closely matched to pupils' different learning needs. However, the needs of the more able pupils receive insufficient attention in some lessons and the level of challenge is not high enough to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets most pupils' needs. Subjects such as ICT, drama, writing and geography are linked together effectively to provide opportunities for creativity and deeper understanding. This is evident in the successful studies of different places and historical periods and is seen in the good quality art and design work. The curriculum is being sensitively adapted to cater for the needs of pupils who find learning difficult. Parents say, 'The new individual education plans are great.' Pupils' wider education is enriched by learning French, working with artists and musicians, and by learning about healthy lifestyles. There are weaknesses in developing pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics and investigation skills in science which hamper their achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a good level of care and support. Where emotional or learning problems arise, the school quickly enlists the support of parents and health professionals to help remove any barriers. The learning mentor provides very effective support for vulnerable pupils. Measures to ensure that pupils are safe, secure and protected are fully implemented. Pupils' academic progress is tracked carefully enabling the school to know where to provide additional support, but the guidance given to pupils is variable. Setting targets and writing helpful comments on pupils' completed work feature strongly in some classes but this approach is used inconsistently across the school. Consequently, pupils are unsure of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In order to raise standards the headteacher is monitoring the school's work accurately. Priorities for improvement have been identified as a result of this monitoring and these have been incorporated into plans to bring about the necessary changes. More challenging targets for pupils have now been set but the impact on their achievement has yet to be felt.

Programmes are in place to improve teaching and gradually the weaknesses are being remedied. The contribution made by subject leaders is increasing but is not yet strong enough in all subjects. The very effective leadership for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is radically improving provision, resulting in this group of pupils making satisfactory progress. The contribution of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors show a deep concern for the

school. An increasingly regular flow of information is placing them in a better position to hold the school to account. As the school requires significant improvement, it consequently provides inadequate value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| 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? | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school and answering our questions so helpfully and politely. I would like to explain our findings.

Although you are happy in school and well cared for, the progress many of you make in mathematics is disappointing. The headteacher and staff were already aware that some of you were not making enough progress in mathematics. This is why you have been tested more often and teachers have been trying to set higher targets to help you to improve. We can see that some teaching makes lessons fun and gives you quite challenging work but this is not happening in all lessons. These things mean we have given your school a Notice to Improve. Other inspectors will visit in six to eight months time to check if things are improving.

Many changes are taking place in your school. You are learning more about how to keep safe and you have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. There are lots of out of school activities, which many of you enjoy. We noticed that the presentation of the work in your books has improved. We were also pleased to find that attendance is good and you behave well.

To help the school improve rapidly we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do the following things.

- Make your learning the very best it can be in every class. You can help by concentrating hard on your work.
- Improve progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2. You can help by doing your homework.
- Make sure that you all know exactly what you need to do to improve. You can help by trying to reach your targets.
- We have asked subject leaders to help the headteacher to check how well you are doing.