

Little Sutton CofE Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	111275
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310551
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Padgett HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Gosling
Headteacher	Miss J Pitchford
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2008
School address	Berwick Road Little Sutton South Wirral Cheshire CH66 4PP
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Age group	4-11
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Amended Report Addendum

Agreed text amendment

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than the average primary school. It serves the village of Little Sutton and surrounding wards on the Wirral to the west of Ellesmere Port. Generally, pupils come from areas that are relatively advantaged. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are a small number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Nearly all pupils speak English fluently. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark Gold.

On the days the inspection took place, Year 3 pupils were away from school on a residential visit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Little Sutton Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a caring, friendly school with a family ethos that fully reflects its Christian foundation. It has been through a period of declining standards but has emerged well equipped to secure future improvement. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory; their standards are back up to where they should be. Improvement since the last inspection has been too slow for several years but, with the support of the local authority, the school is getting better rapidly. Even without the support of the local authority, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes of staff, particularly at a senior level, including the appointment of a new headteacher. Although solid progress has been made, there have been difficulties along the way. These include a loss of confidence within the governing body and by a minority of parents. There is now a new governing body, committed to playing a full part in the school's development, but a section of parents remains unhappy about aspects of the school's work. Parents' perceptions have some but not full justification. The school is working hard to resolve their concerns, and pupils themselves who are most affected could do more to improve their behaviour and attitudes to others. Nevertheless, it is important that the school develops a close partnership with all its parents.

Since 2005, there has been a slow decline in standards in Key Stage 1 and a more significant fall in standards in Key Stage 2. At the time of the inspection, the results of the most recent national tests (the SATs) at Year 6 were not known, but all the evidence available points to a full recovery of standards, especially in mathematics, where standards had fallen most. At the end of Key Stage 1 - at Year 2 - standards are broadly average. Within the school generally, pupils of higher ability do not yet reach their full potential. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory, overall, although both have strong features. The care, support and guidance for pupils are good, and academic guidance is exceptionally effective. The school has developed a thorough and robust system for measuring and tracking pupils' progress, and identifies quickly any pupils who are falling behind. These pupils are provided with catch-up programmes, which are successfully taught by teaching assistants. It is partly because of this close monitoring of pupils' progress that the school is confident about meeting pupils' future learning needs.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Attendance is above the average and most pupils enjoy school; they like their teachers, and have good attitudes to work. Older pupils in particular are mature and sensible and willingly take on positions of responsibility. However, within some lessons, a minority of pupils do not apply themselves fully when working independently and do not do their best work. When teachers give them attention, then their work improves. Poorer attitudes result in less progress than one might expect from the quality of the teaching, and sometimes other pupils who want to get on are adversely affected. Behaviour around school is good, but some staff, parents and pupils express concern over behaviour over lunchtime. The school site is very extensive and is difficult to supervise effectively. The arrangements should be reviewed and improved.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A root and branch overhaul of the school's operation has resulted in much stronger systems and much better teamwork amongst the staff. Gradually, this secure foundation is building the capacity for improvement. Progress has

accelerated recently, partly as a result of the school's invitation to the local authority to intervene, which has successfully reinforced the sense of direction to which the school was committed. A breakdown in relationships within the governing body did not help recovery. A new governing body is formed. It is fully supportive of the school's programme for improvement and is undertaking training in order to play its full part in governing the school in the future. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The children in the Foundation Stage (Reception) are taught in a class alongside a group of Year 1 pupils. This arrangement is not effective. This is because the quality of the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is inadequate and also, because the outdoor area is not generally available to them for a significant part of each day, whether because of a lack of supervision or because there is no shelter from inclement weather.

Relationships between the staff and children are good. Children are happy. They feel cared for. They make sound progress in Reception. From levels of development on entry that are broadly typical of children of their age, most make sufficient progress to reach the early learning goals anticipated for children entering Year 1 and about to begin the National Curriculum. However, the opportunities for children to learn through play and exploration are too limited and not rich enough. Under most circumstances, the Reception children do not receive sufficient adult support to stimulate effective learning through the purposeful use of language during play sessions. When the number of support staff increases, talk and the quality of play become much more effective, and there are sufficient staff to permit children to use the outside to good effect and under close supervision. Unfortunately, this happens infrequently during the week.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of the small minority of pupils who occasionally demonstrate poor attitudes and behaviour. Raise these pupils' expectations of what they can achieve and develop within them a greater pride in their work.
- Improve the partnership with parents to include all parents.
- Establish and improve the effectiveness of governance.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Review and improve the arrangements for lunchtime supervision.
- Further raise the standards of the more able pupils.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly typical for children leaving the Foundation Stage. During the last three years standards have been falling, slowly at the end of Key Stage 1 and more rapidly at the end of Key Stage 2. As this is a small school, with small numbers of pupils in each year group, some variation in standards from year to year is quite normal. However, in 2006 and 2007 results in the national tests were much lower in mathematics and science than predicted and fell short of targets by a large margin. Standards in English were broadly average

and more in line with what the pupils were expected to achieve. Within a generally unsatisfactory picture of performance, more able children did particularly badly whereas pupils with learning difficulties often made good progress, as they continue to do.

The school can point to evidence that pupils made significant progress in mathematics once the school focused on achievement in this subject. But such were the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding it has taken longer than anticipated to bring the children up to the expected level. A scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, and examination of the school's data on pupils' progress demonstrates convincingly that standards have improved significantly, particularly in mathematics. Assessments of work prior to the national tests indicate the school's challenging targets will be met for the first time in several years. The data also provides evidence that pupils in classes lower down the school are also on track to maintain standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, as a consequence of the clear messages that come through assemblies. These are often related to care for others and charitable work and often have a direct link to the Christian faith. Pupils' cultural development in this largely White British school is satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is broadened by studying creative arts in different parts of the world.

Pupils enjoy school. They have a secure understanding of how to stay safe. They are active in school, which promotes their health. However, although pupils eat healthy snacks at break, there is little uptake of a healthy school meal at lunchtime. Attendance and punctuality are good, as are behaviour and attitudes on the part of most pupils. For a minority of pupils, however, behaviour and attitudes are not good enough. Their social development is inadequate.

Older pupils are mature and sensible. They provide good role models for younger ones. Many pupils readily take on positions of responsibility, such as for recycling, road safety, junior play leaders or in serving on the school council. The school council is still developing its role and influence on the life of the school. Now that standards are back on course, the pupils can truly be said to be developing their future economic well-being. Pupils are prepared well for the world of work. For example, Year 6 pupils were learning about all stages of business and enterprise in their post SATs project on making and marketing DVDs through their animated film 'company'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, and teaching of good and outstanding quality was observed during the inspection. In typical lessons there are good relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers plan interesting work for pupils that they enjoy, particularly work in which subjects are linked together within topics. Teachers plan well for the core subjects and skills, in which they involve pupils in assessing their learning. Teaching assistants are integral members of the teaching teams, often taking responsibility for teaching catch-up lessons for children who have fallen behind. They usually work with lower ability

groups, but not exclusively. Good practice in teaching and learning is being disseminated, but is not yet fully embedded in all classes and lessons.

Most children have good attitudes to learning, but a minority of pupils do not always try their hardest. There remains some work to do to plug gaps in learning from past years. This can be seen most strongly with pupils of higher ability, many of whom are not yet achieving the standards of which they are capable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, along with a modern foreign language (French) and extra lessons designed to promote personal and social education and citizenship. In recent years the major developments in the curriculum have been within the core subjects of English and mathematics because of the pressing need to raise standards, particularly in mathematics. To this end the school has adopted the most recent national guidance for teaching literacy and numeracy and introduced programmes of work aimed at raising standards for those pupils who fall behind.

The school has also linked subjects to form themes and projects, in order to make learning more relevant and enjoyable. The school has a strong tradition in the creative arts. There is a good enrichment programme of visits arranged through the local education improvement partnership of associated schools. Residential visits form a well-established part of the curriculum from Year 2 onwards. The school is actively considering how to respond to the government's drive for all schools to provide extended care and activities outside of school time. From the parents' questionnaire returns, this provision would be popular with many of the families with working parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All aspects of safeguarding are up to date and in place. Pastoral guidance is good in most parts. Within class, teachers are positive, patient and care for the pupils. There are programmes to support social and emotional development but they are not fully effective with all pupils. Support of all kinds for pupils with learning difficulties, including those with statements of special educational needs, is of good quality and well managed. They receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants and make good progress. The arrangements for the assessment of pupils' academic progress and their guidance through targets are first class. Pupils are fully involved and know what is expected of them. Their progress is checked every term and the school makes good use of the information it collects to plan next steps.

Some parents are concerned about the well-being of their children over lunchtime. Inspectors found nothing of major concern. Most pupils enjoy their break and play well together. However, the school site, though secure, is very extensive and difficult to monitor and a small minority of pupils are not always well behaved, so this is an aspect of the school's arrangements that inspectors have asked the school to review and improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and her staff are responsible for the good ethos of the school. It is a warm and welcoming place to be with many stimulating displays celebrating children's work, many of which reinforce the Christian values of the school's religious foundation.

The changes in leadership since the last inspection have brought changes in approach. Throughout this period, and during the time when standards were falling, the headteacher and then gradually the staff, have painstakingly secured the foundations on which to build with confidence. The school's leadership and management, supported effectively by the local authority, are now moving forward quickly. Progress is underpinned by rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress, by accurate and honest self-evaluation and by giving staff opportunities to develop leadership roles. The latter ensures that all staff feel ownership of problems and share in the success when problems are resolved. The net result is a strong sense of teamwork within the school. The school's leadership and management now have strength in depth.

A breakdown in confidence between the headteacher and the former leadership of the governing body led to a period when the school was without effective governance. The local authority was invited to intervene at this point. The situation is now remedied. The school has a newly formed governing body which is keen to contribute to the school's further improvement and fulfil its duties of support and challenge. Under the guidance of the local authority it is training to take on these roles.

Many parents are happy with the school. However, a significant minority are unhappy about, for example, behaviour and do not have full confidence in the school. The school should work to build a more effective partnership with all its parents.

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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?	3
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	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
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?	3
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?	2

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

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	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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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

You may recall that Mr Helm and I inspected your school recently. Thank you for your help and your courtesy during the inspection, especially to the pupils who talked to us formally in meetings, and informally in lessons and around school. I am writing this letter to share the results of the inspection with you.

We judged that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. That means it does some things well and it could do some things better. When we read about your school when we were preparing for the inspection, we were concerned that the school may not be getting better quickly enough and that your standards, especially in mathematics and science, were too low. It was a pleasant surprise when we saw the good progress you have been making recently, and to find that your standards are back up to the level they should be.

We saw that most of you enjoy school and that you get on very well with your teachers. You and the teachers make the school what it is - a friendly, welcoming place with lots of work on display that you can be proud of. The teachers care for you, and most of you behave well in return. Lessons are interesting and assemblies teach you important messages about developing good Christian values. All this is good.

On the not so good side, Mr Helm and I thought that some pupils were not working as hard as they could and did not always do their best. Although we saw good behaviour, you told us that a small number of pupils did not always behave well to each other. Some girls often fell out of friendships and some boys were hurtful to each other and occasionally had fights, especially over lunchtime. This made them upset and stopped them learning. Fortunately, the older pupils amongst you are sensible and mature, and you help the younger ones by showing them how work and play together in harmony.

We recognise the improvements that the headteacher and the teachers have made and that are now beginning to take effect. There are some things that Mr Helm and I have asked the school to do to make the school even better. These are:

- to improve the attitudes and behaviour of pupils where these are not good enough at present, and make sure all pupils develop pride in their work
- where needed, to improve the partnership between school and home
- to make sure the new governing body becomes good at doing its job
- to give children in Reception more and better opportunities to learn through play, inside and outside the classroom
- to make sure those of you who find learning easy achieve your very best
- to tighten up the rules when you are out on the school field during the lunchtime break.

Most of these points are for the teachers to tackle. But the first point is one for you to take on board. It is something you should discuss with your teachers.

Mr Helm and I wish you the very best for your future.