

Sythwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125084
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315145
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Olson Davis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bruce McLaren
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Tresilian
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Sythwood Horsell Woking GU21 3AX
Telephone number	01483 770 063
Fax number	01483 767 414

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups being those of White British and Pakistani heritage. A well above average proportion of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The most common home languages are Punjabi and Urdu. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need (SEN) is well above average. The school has a local authority resource base that accommodates twelve visually impaired pupils. There are currently six visually impaired pupils in school. The rate at which pupils join or leave the school is higher than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sythwood Primary School provides a satisfactory, and improving, standard of education. Under the effective pastoral leadership of the headteacher, the school is an inclusive community that contributes well to pupils' good personal development. There are strengths in the caring approach adopted by all adults to ensure that the school is a calm and supportive environment for pupils. Relationships are good. Pupils enjoy their school and they feel safe. As a result, they behave well and are keen to do well in their work. The school council makes a good contribution to the life of the school. Older pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given, such as helping and playing with younger pupils at lunch times.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' good cultural development. It is greatly enriched by a wide range of additional activities that further develop pupils' skills and their enjoyment of learning. Parents support the school well. The vast majority are pleased with the provision it makes for their children. One wrote, 'The staff are very kind and supportive. The children are polite and helpful. Sythwood School is a lovely environment for children to be taught in'. Good partnerships with parents, the local community, and local secondary schools enrich the curriculum and provide benefits for pupils' learning and well-being.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average. Given the starting points of most pupils, this represents satisfactory achievement. In the last three years, pupils' standards and levels of achievement have fallen. In response, school leaders modified and improved systems for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics. They use this information to monitor the progress of pupils to identify when they are not achieving as well as they should. Some teachers are now using this information well to plan their lessons and show pupils what they need to do to improve. However, this use is inconsistent and not all teachers make rigorous use of assessment information to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can. More remains to be done to raise pupils' standards and levels of achievement further, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and the deputy provide a clear direction to the work of the school ensuring that there is a strong sense of teamwork. Middle managers offer useful support and advice to colleagues throughout the school. However, they do not sufficiently monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility or work alongside their colleagues. This limits their ability to raise standards by providing help where it is most needed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of good teaching and well-planned activities. This area is run by a well-organised and motivated staff team who provide a stimulating learning environment for the youngest children. The classrooms and outdoor learning areas are well organised and attractive. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the good provision. As a result, children make good progress in their acquisition of the English language and in their personal development, but many are below the levels expected for children of their age when they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in reading and writing, and mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information so that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Develop the role of managers to ensure that with a clear oversight of standards and the quality of teaching in their area of responsibility they can better support their colleagues.

A small proportion of the 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

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are below average overall. At the end of Year 2, standards have generally been average because of good achievement in the younger classes. Although, standards at the end of Year 2 dipped significantly in 2007, and fewer pupils reached the expected levels in reading and writing, most made sound progress from their starting points. This particular year group contains a high proportion of pupils who find learning difficult. The staffing difficulties which resulted in inconsistencies in teaching have now been resolved. The current Year 2 pupils are now on track to achieve well and meet their challenging targets.

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. The school recognises that the progress pupils make throughout the school is uneven because the quality of teaching varies, particularly in Key Stage 2. Although pupils achieve satisfactorily some pupils could do better. Lower and middle ability girls do not achieve as well as boys. Those learning English make good progress in acquiring fluency in spoken English but their reading and writing skills do not improve as rapidly. They have difficulties in understanding the technical language in mathematics and this hampers their progress in this subject. Visually impaired pupils and pupils with moderate learning difficulties and pupils with a special education need make similar progress to their peers because of the effective support given by teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a strong social sense by raising money for charities at home and abroad. Pupils are friendly, confident and enthusiastic about school. As one said, 'I like the school. I wouldn't want anything changed'. Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of good diet and exercise. They eagerly participate in the many opportunities for sport and exercise. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' sound progress in their basic skills and their good personal and social skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and this sets a positive tone for learning. They use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to motivate learners and to add impact and interest in lessons. Most lessons are well planned but there are instances when not

enough consideration is given to the needs of different groups. For example, important words for a lesson are not always displayed or explained. This means that some pupils, particularly those learning English, do not easily learn or understand technical terms specific to the lesson. In some lessons, assessment information is not used effectively to plan the next steps in learning. As a result, pupils' learning is not moved on quickly enough. In these lessons, more able pupils find the work lacks challenge whilst less able pupils find that it is too difficult. Most teachers mark pupils' work well using guidelines, which pupils understand but there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The greater emphasis on literacy within lessons ensures teachers now provide better planned opportunities for pupils to extend their reading and writing skills in other areas. Teachers establish meaningful links between subjects. This makes learning more relevant for pupils and helps them to acquire valuable learning skills. Pupils' awareness of personal safety and good understanding of healthy lifestyles is well provided for through a comprehensive programme of personal, social, and health education. Pupils speak enthusiastically about regular events such as 'Wacky Wednesdays' and themed weeks which give added interest to their learning. There is high participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include sports, drama and Spanish. The needs of visually impaired pupils and pupils with moderate learning difficulties are assessed accurately. Well-structured individual plans enable teachers and teaching assistants to help these pupils make sound progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and all required checks and assessments are securely in place. Pupils feel safe because they are confident that they can talk to an adult if they have any problems or concerns. Effective induction procedures ensure that pupils joining the school other than at the normal times settle in quickly. The school makes good use of outside agencies to support pupils and their families. School leaders have worked hard to improve attendance. Their efforts have been successful in reducing short-term absences but some parents still take their children abroad for extended periods during term-time. Teachers keep termly records of pupils' progress in English and mathematics. However, these records are not yet used well enough to ensure good progress, particularly for some groups of pupils. Pupils have targets for improvement and are keen to meet the expectations set for them. However, some targets are not precise enough and are not always written in a way that children can easily understand. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently clear about what they need to do to get to the next level in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School self-evaluation is sound, so the most important things that need to improve have been identified. It is too early to measure the success of the new strategies. However, there are early signs that innovations such as the extension of phonic skills programmes into Year 3 and the focus on mathematics skills within Years 3 to 6 are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. The school has a sound capacity for improvement. Regular monitoring of

teaching by school leaders has led to greater consistency but more remains to be done to ensure that teachers are making the best use of assessment information to accelerate the progress made by some pupils. Some managers are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating the school's work. For example, their role in monitoring teaching and working alongside colleagues is underdeveloped. This means that they are not fully aware of the strengths of teaching and those aspects that need improving within their particular areas of responsibility. Governors give staunch support to the school. They are now putting greater emphasis on raising standards and achievement.

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Annex A

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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	2
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

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	3
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	3
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sythwood Primary School, Woking, GU21 3AX

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listened carefully to what you had to say about the school. This is what we thought.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education and is improving. These are some of the things that your school does well:

- the staff take good care of you which makes you feel safe in school
- the children in the Foundation Stage get a good start in school
- you enjoy your learning and the other activities in school
- you behave well and want to do your best in lessons
- the school listens to you when you suggest how things could be better and you value being given responsibilities
- you are making satisfactory progress in your learning and this is getting better.

To improve further, we have asked the school to:

- help you do better in your reading, writing and mathematics lessons
- make sure that teachers give you work that is at just the right level for you
- provide opportunities for teachers who have particular responsibilities to observe lessons and work with teachers in other classrooms; this will help them to check that you are being taught well and that you are making good progress.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school. We also hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school even better for you.

Yours sincerely

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector