

Sydenham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130868
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315635
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	David Mankelow

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Varney
Headteacher	Juliette Westwood
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Calder Walk Sydenham Leamington Spa CV31 1SA
Telephone number	01926 339138
Fax number	01926 435291

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school that serves a diverse area with some social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. An increasing number of pupils enter the school in year groups other than Reception. Children's skills and experiences on entry to Reception vary from year to year but are generally much lower than usually found for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, as are the proportions from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is not their first language. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Activemark, Race Equality, International School, Artsmark Gold and Ecoschool Green Flag.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with several outstanding features. A major strength is the welcoming ethos and exemplary pastoral care, which results in pupils' excellent personal development and contributes to their good achievement. Children make a good start in the Reception class because the provision is good. However, the very low starting points of most children mean that they do not reach the expected goals for learning by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress but standards remain below average by the end of Year 2. Good progress in Years 3 to 6 means that standards are broadly average by the time pupils move to their secondary schools. Another significant strength is the success staff have in including all pupils in the life of the school, whatever their level of need. Pupils at the early stage of learning English receive outstanding support from specialist teachers and so make excellent progress. A team of very good teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively, enabling them to make the same progress as their peers. The behaviour of a very small minority of pupils is extremely challenging but teachers manage this very well. When asked to mark behaviour out of ten in their classes, a Year 6 pupil quickly replied, 'nine and three quarters'. Teaching is good throughout the school, and some is outstanding. Relationships are excellent and teachers plan exciting work so pupils pay attention and most concentrate well. A very wide range of ability exists in every class and teachers mostly plan work that is well matched to pupils' individual needs. However, on occasions, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and so do not reach the standards of which they are capable. The curriculum is outstanding. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their numeracy and literacy skills in lessons other than mathematics and English. For example, literacy and historical investigation skills were well developed in a Year 4 lesson about Henry VIII. Teachers provide an exceptional range of enrichment activities, and after-school clubs are well-attended. As a result, the vast majority of pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Pupils take on many responsibilities around the school. Some are 'peer mediators' and help other pupils to resolve conflicts peacefully. Pupils report very little bullying and say that it is effectively dealt with when it happens. Leadership and management are good overall. The school's wide range of national awards is not only evidence of its success but the process of applying for them has allowed all teachers to be involved in self-evaluation procedures. As a result, the school has an accurate view of how well it is doing. The school sets long-term and short-term academic targets for individual pupils based on regular assessments of their work. Targets are generally used well to raise standards but in a minority of cases, assessments have not been accurate enough to set appropriate targets. The school has identified this problem and now effectively moderates assessments. However, the improved procedures have not yet had time to raise the achievement of the pupils involved.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception class staff provide excellent pastoral care. Good induction procedures help children settle quickly and happily into school. A typical comment from a new mother was, 'My daughter's teacher has listened to my "first-time mum at primary school" concerns and has helped the transition go very well.' Children make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is effective and there is a good balance between adult-led and child-inspired activities. The children are highly motivated by these activities and keen to share them with visitors. They were insistent on telling the inspector how they had adapted the story 'We're all going on a

Bear Hunt' to involve Power Rangers. Good assessment procedures mean that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and their needs are well met. Outdoor play resources have improved since the last inspection but restricted access to the outdoor area reduces opportunities to use them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide high levels of challenge to more able pupils consistently across the school.
- Ensure that all assessment results are accurate and are used to set appropriately challenging targets for all pupils to improve achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress from very low starting points to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. The test results in 2007 were average in mathematics and science but below average in English. This was because three pupils at an early stage of learning English and two others with severe learning difficulties related to language development joined the school shortly before the tests. The school has a good reputation locally for supporting pupils with learning difficulties so inward mobility continues to be high, which depresses the test results, especially in English. In a minority of classes, a small proportion of more able pupils do not reach the levels of which they are capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Visits to the theatre, museums and art galleries ensure that pupils have an excellent understanding of their own and other cultures. Staff create a very peaceful environment where pupils from different cultures work harmoniously together. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding of life in multicultural Britain. Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong and they develop into confident, independent, mature young people by the time they leave the school. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are proud to undertake a wide range of responsibilities around the school, such as answering the telephone, helping weaker readers and by manning the 'buddy bus stops' at playtimes. These benches were built at the suggestion of the school councillors who take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and many take part in the wide range of after-school sporting clubs. Most pupils, from Reception to Year 6, enjoy the fruit that is provided for them every day, and many take good advantage of the filtered water that is available. The school has very good procedures for improving attendance and has exceeded its target despite a number of families making extended visits abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships are excellent in all classes. As a result, pupils have excellent attitudes and try to do their best at all times. Lessons are planned very well, with clear learning intentions that are made explicit to the pupils, therefore pupils know what they should learn by the end of each lesson. Most lessons end with the teacher asking pupils to assess for themselves whether they

have been successful. This information is used effectively to plan the next lesson. Work is usually well matched to pupils' needs. In particular, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given work that helps them to achieve the carefully planned targets on their individual education plans. As a result, they make good progress. However, on occasions, the most able pupils are not given work that is hard enough and in these lessons do not do as well as they should. The provision for pupils at an early stage of learning English is excellent. As a result, they make excellent progress and are soon able to take a full part in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum means that most pupils cannot wait to get to school. Pupils' learning is greatly enriched by an extensive range of visits, visitors and after school clubs. For example, clubs for Portuguese, Punjabi and Bhangra dancing make a significant contribution to pupils' excellent cultural development. Teachers spend a great deal of time planning exciting lessons. An example was seen in Year 2 when the teacher took on the role of a pirate to encourage pupils to write descriptive sentences about the pirate ship that was 'sailing on the sea' on the carpet. This resulted in pupils making good progress in their writing skills during the lesson. French is taught effectively throughout the school. Even in the Reception class, a child was heard singing Jingle Bells in French while playing with Father Christmas figures in the white sand being used as snow. The programme for personal, social and health education makes a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding pastoral care means that pupils feel very safe in school. They know how to look after themselves, which is reflected in the school's 'Kerb Safe' award. Pupils feel very comfortable about approaching adults if they have any worries. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure and external agencies are used very effectively to support families who find themselves in difficulty. The nurture group is extremely effective in helping vulnerable pupils to develop their social skills. Pupils who are new to the country receive excellent support so they settle in very quickly. Teachers mark work conscientiously so pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. The extent of older pupils' understanding of their individual targets is such that they not only know what they need to do to correct mistakes they have made, but also what they need to learn to move from Level 3 to Level 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's outstanding leadership is inspirational, which motivates all staff and pupils to do their best and promotes very strong teamwork. Parents very much appreciate this, a typical comment being, 'Sydenham School has an exceptional head who can both manage the school and be caring in a pastoral way.' The school's accurate self-evaluation procedures have led to an effective 'single integrated development plan', which clearly identifies what the school needs to do next. Pupils' progress is rigorously monitored and this has led to senior leaders identifying the need to improve the accuracy of assessment in a minority of classes. New procedures are now in place so appropriately challenging targets are set throughout the school. However, it is too early to see the impact of this on the achievement of the pupils involved.

The governors are effective and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are supportive but also hold the senior leaders to account. Pupils' overall good achievement and some outstanding elements of its work demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	1
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.

Annex A

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 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	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

- 6 December 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Sydenham Primary School, Leamington Spa CV31 1SA You may remember that I visited your school at the beginning of December with another inspector. Thank you very much for making us so welcome and telling us all about your school. I am writing now to tell you what we found. Most of you and your parents believe that you go to a good school and we agree with you. Nearly all of you make good progress and reach standards that are about the same as other eleven-year-olds by the time you go to your secondary schools. This is because the teaching is good. Most of you really enjoy coming to school because your lessons are exciting and you go on lots of visits. We really wanted to come to Birmingham with you to see Peter Pan! The way all the adults look after you is excellent, as is the way that you look after each other. Most of you behave really well and you know that you will be treated fairly if you do not. All of your teachers and your headteacher work really hard to make sure that your school gets better and better, and we have suggested two things they need to do that will help.
- Make sure that all of you are always given work that is hard enough.
- Make sure that they always assess how well you have done accurately so that everybody's targets are the right ones. You can help your teachers a lot by continuing to work hard and behave well. I wish you all the very best for the future. Yours sincerely David Mankelow Lead inspector

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

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You can help your teachers a lot by continuing to work hard and behave well.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Mankelow
Lead inspector