

Sowe Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103671
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	323878
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	195
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Chappell
Headteacher	Karma Aston
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Princethorpe Way Coventry CV3 2QX
Telephone number	02476 456063
Fax number	02476 459768

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well the school has improved provision and pupils' performance in mathematics in Key Stage 2, particularly for the more able
- how good provision is in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how well children are progressing.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Sowe Valley is a smaller than average primary school. About three quarters of the pupils come from a White British background. The remaining pupils are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nature of these difficulties lies mainly in the areas of emotional, speech, language and communication. A well above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in the Reception class. There have been considerable improvements to the buildings during the past year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sowe Valley Primary is a good school. Children get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress. Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 and 2 because of good teaching and an interesting curriculum. Effective care, guidance and support and a positive school atmosphere lead to good personal development and well-being for pupils, which also promotes pupils' enjoyment of school and their good learning.

Good leadership and management contribute considerably to the good quality provision and the positive outcomes for pupils. The headteacher provides strong leadership and clear educational direction. The new deputy headteacher has settled in well. The deputy headteacher and other key leaders are effective in their roles. Performance is systematically monitored and reviewed. As a result, the school has a clear understanding of what it does well and takes effective action to bring about improvements. There are good systems to assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Community cohesion is promoted well, as demonstrated by the school's positive ethos and the good partnerships with other local agencies, parents and partner schools. The school has a good understanding of the community's different backgrounds and cultures and all groups of pupils are valued equally. Governors are supportive and are more involved in monitoring and improvement planning than at the time of the last inspection. They have a clear understanding of the school's performance and this enables them to offer constructive challenge. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained good provision and pupils' good progress. It has not allowed the inevitable disruptions caused by a major building programme to adversely affect pupils' learning and standards. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Parents hold very positive views about the school and the vast majority are extremely pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Pupils' progress, the approachability of staff, and care and support provided come in for particular praise. Typical comments from the parents' questionnaire included: 'Pleased with my child's progress', 'The headteacher and teachers take time to speak to parents', 'My child is very happy' and 'Very pleased with special needs provision'.

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average overall. In the 2008 tests for Year 6, standards in English was above average and just above in science. Pupils made very good progress in English from their starting point in Year 2 and good progress in science to reach these standards. However, pupils' progress in mathematics was satisfactory and standards were below average, with only a few pupils attaining the higher-than-expected standard of Level 5. Improving provision and pupils' achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 2 have been the priority and positive action has been taken. The school's assessment and tracking show that more pupils are attaining the higher levels. However, there is scope to increase opportunities for pupils to apply and develop numeracy skills in other areas and so raise standards further.

Good quality teaching gives rise to pupils' good progress through the school. Teachers convey clear expectations of learning and behaviour. They establish good relationships with pupils and manage them well. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and respond well to teachers' clear explanations and instructions. Questioning is used effectively by teachers to challenge pupils' thinking and check their understanding. In the main, assessment information is used well to plan teaching and to match activities and tasks to pupils' abilities and needs. Where this happens, pupils are effectively challenged and make good progress. Occasionally, tasks are not well

matched to pupils' needs, particularly the more able, and learning slows. At times, the more able pupils could also be given the planned extension activities sooner. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy. The small group strategies to support these pupils work well and they also make good progress. All pupils are set specific learning targets in literacy and numeracy so they know what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum successfully promotes good academic progress for pupils and makes a positive contribution to their personal development. There are good links between subjects which add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Pupils have good opportunities to apply and develop writing skills in other subjects. For example, in Year 6, pupils as World War Two evacuees wrote interesting letters home to their parents. Art is a strong feature of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 3 painted striking scenes in the style of Van Gogh and Year 5 produced good quality still life drawings after being inspired by the works of Matisse and Manet. A good range of additional activities including clubs and visits are offered. Popular clubs include choir, dance, football and netball. A successful residential visit for Years 5 and 6 to the Peak District provides exciting activities in geography and science as well as building pupils' personal and social skills. Improvements to the accommodation have increased the scope of facilities and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. A parent said, 'The recent changes to classrooms and grounds are a huge improvement.'

There are effective procedures to protect and safeguard pupils. Pupils feel safe and very well cared for at school. They are also confident that there is always a trusted adult they can turn to if they are upset or have a problem. As a parent wrote, 'Teachers and staff are very supportive.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are courteous, friendly and responsible. In assembly, they appreciate and reflect on the importance of a fairer world. They understand the merits of fair trade agreements. Pupils certainly enjoy school and this is shown by their keen participation in lessons. Attendance is satisfactory. The school works hard to monitor and promote good attendance but there are a minority of parents who are not supporting these efforts. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercising regularly. They thrive on the additional responsibilities they are given and make a good contribution to the community. Members of the school council, for example, have organised recycling activities and contributed to improvements to the decor and outdoor facilities, and all pupils help to raise funds for a variety of national and global charities. By the time they leave, they have good literacy and sound numeracy skills. In addition to these, their personal and social skills are well developed and so pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's knowledge and skills on entry to Reception are below the levels expected for their age but by the end of Reception, children reach broadly average standards in most areas of learning except in elements of literacy. Effective attention to children's welfare and an interesting range of learning activities and good teaching enable children to make good progress. A significant proportion of pupils have limited communication and literacy skills but they develop their speaking and listening skills well because language work is successfully incorporated into all activities. Children also make good gains in their personal and social development because of the positive relationships established between adults and children. Children thoroughly enjoy

their learning and possess positive attitudes to their tasks. They are well motivated to learn and readily share resources with their peers. There is generally a good balance of adult-led activities and allowing children to explore. A good range of outdoor activities promote learning well, particularly in creative and physical development. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there is very good teamwork among teachers and assistants. These factors contribute to the good quality provision and to children's development. The school has identified the need to use assessment more effectively to plan child-initiated activities and staff are taking positive steps to improve children's skills in letter sounds, reading and basic writing to raise standards in these areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons are sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to apply and develop numeracy skills in other subjects and so raise standards in mathematics 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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sowe Valley Primary School, Coventry, CV3 2QX

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. You attend a good school. Everyone is pleased with the recent improvements to the buildings.

These are the main strengths of the school.

- You really enjoy school and the activities provided.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start.
- Your school is a friendly and pleasant place to learn in.
- Teaching is good and you are learning well. You make good progress to reach above average standards in English and science.
- You benefit from an interesting range of learning activities, including clubs and visits.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and you get on well with others.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- Staff take good care of you well and give you the support you need.
- You make good contributions to the school and the wider community.
- Your headteacher leads the school well. She receives good support from other senior staff.

These are two areas the school has been asked to look at to make it even better.

- Your teachers could challenge you more in lessons, particularly those who sometimes find learning easy.
- Your teachers could provide more opportunities to apply and develop your numeracy skills in other subjects to raise standards further in mathematics.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. Keep up the good work. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts Lead inspector