

# Sutton Valence Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118314
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326805
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacqueline Marshall

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	201
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Eihir Roberts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Drury
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 July 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	North Street Sutton Valence Maidstone ME17 3HT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 842188
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 844549

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326805

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A few are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average overall but fluctuates across the school and in some year groups is above average. The main additional learning needs are speech and language, behavioural and emotional and social, dyslexia and hearing impairment as well as individual specific needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one class of Reception children. The school has gained a number of external awards recognising its commitment to promoting learning, study and healthy lifestyles.

## 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. It provides an effective education. Pupils enjoy good relationships with all staff and they develop well as individuals. They view their school as a place where everyone gets along. They greatly appreciate the fact that this is a school where every child really does matter. The vast majority of parents agree. Pastoral care is strong because everyone in the school works hard to make sure each child feels valued, secure, confident and ready to learn. This is a key feature in the pupils' positive attitudes to learning that, together with their good standard of behaviour, is reflected in their good personal development. The good curriculum is particularly strong in English and is enriched well. Teachers provide exciting and interesting activities that successfully motivate all pupils. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and leave visitors in no doubt about how much they enjoy being at school.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children get off to a good start from their expected starting points. Their personal and social development is a notable strength. Because of effective teaching and a good curriculum, all groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well. Standards which had dropped in previous years have been improving. Standards in Year 6 in 2008 rose to average, and for the current Year 6 cohort they are broadly average, though above average in English. This reflects the considerable work the school has done in improving teaching and learning in English across the school. Mathematics is the school's priority, though the standards reached in mathematics have yet to be matched to the good improvements seen in pupils' literacy skills. Through good quality marking and clear targets, pupils have a good understanding of the next steps in their learning in English. The school is aware of the need to replicate this in all other areas of the curriculum, especially in mathematics and science. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are doing. They use this information effectively to give additional support when needed and to plan lessons. This is particularly the case in English, where staff have good subject knowledge and are confident when judging pupils' levels and progress. However, the use of information to set increasingly challenging activities and extend pupils in science is less effective. The school recognises this and it is working hard to raise the quality of all learning, and in science in particular, to the level of the best.

The good achievement seen in lessons has been largely due to the focused and clear vision of senior leaders. They have successfully driven forward the good developments seen since the last inspection, such as the recent improvements in pupils' writing skills. This steady and sustained improvement demonstrates clearly that the school has a good capacity to make further progress. Increasingly, subject leaders and governors are developing their skills in checking teaching and learning to ensure the same high quality of provision across the school. Senior leaders use data effectively to check carefully how well the school is doing, to set challenging, achievable targets and to determine just what needs to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding typical for their age. Improvements in the effectiveness of the Early Years in recent years are ensuring that overall achievement is now good. By the end of the Reception Year, most children now reach an above average level of development compared with that nationally. Children's behaviour is good due to the strong focus on personal development. The Early Years team has a strong partnership with parents and effective communication ensures children settle quickly. The

children learn well because they are soon at ease with the adults and thoroughly enjoy the interesting, carefully planned activities. These are well balanced, with good opportunities to make independent choices as well as those guided by adults. Children use both indoors and outdoors for their learning. However, the outdoor environment is limited in the learning opportunities it provides and the school has identified the development of this area as a priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage is managed effectively on a day-to-day basis by the class teacher. Checks on how well new strategies and ideas are doing are carried out regularly. Consequently, systems are being developed to more accurately check children's starting points, so the school can gauge how well children are doing. Children are safe and secure because staff look after each individual child's needs rigorously.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teachers' marking for improvement and the use of pupils' targets to match that seen in English, so pupils understand the next steps in their learning, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure assessment information is used effectively to provide appropriate opportunities for all pupils to develop their investigative skills, especially in science.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Across the school, pupils achieve well from average starting points. Children get off to a good start in the EYFS and pupils' good progress continues throughout Years 1 to 6. Following a dip in 2007, standards and achievement have risen steadily and pupils now achieve well, though standards fluctuate from year to year due to relatively small numbers and the changing nature of the classes. Standards reached by pupils in national tests in 2008 were below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. Pupils currently in both Year 2 and Year 6 have made good progress from their individual starting points and are working at above average levels in English and average levels in mathematics and science. Mathematics remains the subject where pupils' standards and progress have risen less rapidly and consequently is correctly the school's current priority. The school sets increasingly challenging and demanding targets for pupils of all abilities. Good teaching, combined with effective tracking procedures, are key factors in why these are being met and in some instances exceeded.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils develop a good understanding of right and wrong and of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Such values and attitudes fostered in the early years set the pattern for the rest of their time at Sutton Valence and beyond. Pupils respond increasingly well to their responsibilities and are very good at helping one another. Pupils make an effective contribution to school life, for example through the school council. They raise important questions and put forward ideas for improvement, such as improving the playground equipment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is a key factor in their good behaviour and positive relationships. The school has plans to build on the quality work it has done, for example its recent work on developing pupils' understanding of the Romany culture, so they better understand living within a multicultural Britain. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of leading and maintaining a healthy and safe lifestyle. A good foundation for pupils' future economic well-being is provided by ensuring good achievement in basic skills

and in their ability to work well together. While for a very few families it remains a problem, attendance is currently good. This is because pupils are keen to come to school and the school has worked hard with pupils and families.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The key features of good teaching are the very good relationships adults have with children and the interest and fun generated in lessons which help pupils to develop very positive attitudes to their work. Throughout the school, pupils work well and classroom chatter is about what they are learning. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard and they explain tasks clearly to them. They provide good opportunities for pupils to talk about and explain their ideas, which they do with confidence. Pupils' behaviour is good because it is managed well, ensuring classrooms are places for learning. Skilled teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively, whether individually or in small groups. These pupils therefore make the same good progress as their peers. Overall, teachers plan work effectively to meet a range of pupils' needs. This is because they use assessment and pupils' targets increasingly well to plan activities for different groups. New systems to check how well pupils are doing in science have yet to be used consistently enough to raise achievement and challenge further. The quality of marking in literacy is good. The school is aware of the need to extend this good practice to mathematics and subsequently other subjects to enable pupils to see just how they can improve further.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is adapted well to provide for the needs of different groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult and the gifted and talented. Information gained from checking and evaluating pupils' progress is aiding the development of the curriculum in tackling areas of relative weakness. For instance, over the last year, the school has reviewed the provision for mathematics and improved the quality of opportunities for pupils to use and apply the skills they have learnt. A current focus in science is targeting the range of investigative skills pupils are learning. A well planned programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education helps to promote pupils' good personal development. The wide range of extra-curricular activities adds to pupils' enjoyment of school. There is a good focus on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and increased opportunities for pupils in ICT. During the whole school themed weeks, as well as in the day-to-day curriculum, good links are made between curriculum areas, enabling pupils to use skills they have learnt in different subjects and adding to pupils' overall enjoyment.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

This is a school in which pupils' individual needs are fully recognised and where their pastoral care is given a high priority. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are all secure. Pupils feel very safe at school and explain that bullying is not a problem - a feeling echoed by a very large majority of parents. There are a number of strong links with outside agencies which add to the effectiveness of the school's good systems to support pupils' social, emotional and academic needs and, in the main, links with parents are equally strong. Academic guidance is focused on

how pupils can make good progress. Clear targets shared with pupils at the start of each lesson mean pupils know what they will be learning. These are used effectively so pupils know exactly what they need to do next to improve on a day to day basis and can check their own understanding. All pupils have individual targets in English which ensure they know the next step in their learning and what they need to do to achieve it. The school is working to make similar good assessment procedures consistent in other subjects, such as mathematics.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and senior leaders regularly analyse the school's results and monitor teaching to see where it is most effective and what needs to be improved. As a result, they have a good understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. Priorities are accurately identified and their strong focus on teaching and learning has been effective in securing pupils' good achievement. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties capably. Governors, a number of whom have recently joined, have begun to check more thoroughly how well the school is doing, although they are aware of the need to develop these skills further. While the majority of parents agree the school is well led, a minority of the responses to the inspection team felt this was an area for improvement. The headteacher and governors are aware of these concerns and are working hard to further improve communication with parents to address them. Pupils' good personal development and well-being are strengths because leaders have made these a priority. Pupils are encouraged effectively to play their part in the life of the school, local area and wider world. Leaders undertake evaluation of the school's role in developing community cohesion. Consequently, this aspect of the school's work is good and plans are in place to strengthen further its links with the wider world.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

### 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 <sup>1</sup> 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

---

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

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

12 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sutton Valence Primary School, Maidstone, ME17 3HT

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We were pleased to hear that you really like school, that all the adults are kind and look after you well so that you feel very safe and ready to learn every day. You all get on well with each other and are getting good at sorting out any problems you have by following the school's rules and guidance. We think you are polite to adults and try hard to behave as your teachers expect.

We think your school is good. Because of all the hard work that you and your teachers have been doing, standards in the school are average overall but above average in English. The curriculum planned for you is good at meeting your needs. Your teachers are good at doing what is expected to help you make good progress in your work. We agree that you are helped to enjoy your learning because there are many interesting things for you to do and get involved in. Together with senior staff and governors, your headteacher does a good job of running your school. They know what needs to be done to make it even better. In order to help you learn faster, we have asked the adults at your school to do two things:

- Make better use of targets and marking, just like you have in English, to help you understand what to do next in other subjects, starting with mathematics.
- Make sure your work is always challenging enough, especially in science.

You can help by always trying to work hard in school and behave well. Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school, and we wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall

Lead Inspector