

Sutton CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110802
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337577
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Jim Griffin

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 of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Read
Headteacher	Gill Gilbert
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2006
School address	The Brook Sutton Cambridgeshire
Telephone number	01353 778351
Fax number	01353 778351
Email address	head@sutton.cambs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried by four additional inspectors. They observed ten of the eleven teachers as they visited seventeen lessons, including two that were jointly observed with the headteacher. They looked at a range of other information, including data showing the progress made by pupils and samples of their work. The inspectors held discussions with governors, the headteacher and other staff, a group of older pupils and with the School Improvement Partner. Questionnaires returned by 68 parents, 98 pupils and 21 members of staff were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' performance and whether the apparent decline has been reversed
- teaching and whether it provides the challenge needed for all learners in mostly mixed-age classes to make at least sound progress
- the effectiveness of the school's work aimed at improving attainment, especially in writing and science
- the impact of the monitoring and evaluation work of governors, senior and middle leaders.

Information about the school

Sutton is a larger than average sized primary school with an admission limit that usually results in mixed-age classes. Nearly all pupils are White British and most live in the village. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than typically found. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average. The school has the Healthy School and Activemark awards.

Since the previous inspection, a number of senior staff have left the school to take up posts elsewhere. After a considerable period of instability in staffing, the school now has a full complement of permanent staff.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement in writing and in science, and the use of assessment information in science, all of which are currently inadequate.

The school's leaders and managers are committed to improving the school. Over the past nine months the headteacher has established both the consensus and momentum to begin to address a number of identified weaknesses. This has coincided with more support and challenge from the local authority. The governing body, which had been slow to grasp the scale of the issues, is beginning to find a better balance between its support and challenge for the school. Consequently, the school's self-evaluation and associated development planning now focuses on the right priorities. However, improvement to pupils' achievement in science does not have enough emphasis. A number of useful initiatives are beginning to improve teaching and learning across the school. However, they have not yet had time to eradicate underachievement, caused by the legacy of inadequate teaching, which was due in part to previous instability in staffing. As a result, there are significant gaps in pupils' learning. The new team of staff who lead work in the key stages, known as team leaders, are starting to make valuable contributions to improving achievement. The better focus on tracking pupils' progress, the checks on the quality of teaching and the growing contribution of team leaders indicate that the school has the capacity to improve further.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and by the time they join Year 1 standards are slightly above those expected for their age. From Years 1 to 6 pupils' attainment remains broadly average but closer analysis reveals a downward trend in results over a number of years. Pupils' progress is satisfactory in mathematics and reading but inadequate in writing and in science. Aided by a set of well-targeted interventions, the learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory and improving.

Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory but, while the quality of marking is improving it remains inconsistent, especially in writing and science. There are weaknesses in the use of assessment information to securely support pupils' learning. For example, teachers do not analyse where pupils experience difficulties sufficiently well. As a result, in a minority of lessons work is not pitched at the right level to challenge all learners, especially the more-able. This is particularly the case in science.

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The school has important strengths. The care, guidance and support for pupils is of good quality, centred on the positive relationships that prevail between pupils and staff, and with one another. As a result, pupils feel safe and their behaviour is good. Pupils know how to stay healthy and they make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has good procedures for keeping pupils safe and works well with other agencies to promote their well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in both writing and science, by:
 - setting and regularly reviewing targets for the progress made by pupils in each class,
 - identifying and developing a whole-school approach for addressing the key areas of difficulty for pupils in these subjects,
 - improving teachers' skills in teaching these subjects.
- Improve the use of assessment information, in Years 1 to 6, by:
 - establishing a system that tracks pupils' progress in science,
 - using this tracking information to provide the right level of challenge in all lessons, for all learners, especially the more able,
 - making more use of targets for pupils so that they know where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Strengthen the drive for school improvement, by:
 - making the use of pupils' progress data the key measure that informs all monitoring work,
 - making improvement to pupils' academic outcomes a higher priority in the monitoring work of the governing body,
 - ensuring the governing body and senior staff tackle weaknesses in the teaching and better manage staff changes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Achievement is inadequate as most pupils, especially the more-able, do not make enough progress in writing and science. While attainment is broadly average across the school there is a declining trend in results at the end of Years 2 and 6. Girls have done better than boys in English, mathematics and science, compared with their peers nationally. Examination of the attainment and progress of current pupils shows that this situation still exists.

To some extent the lack of progress is caused by earlier disruption in pupils' learning, and as a result there are sometimes gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The school is at an early stage in its effort to improve pupils' attainment and progress in

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writing. Work aimed at raising standards in science is not yet supported by a coherent whole-school plan. A range of intervention strategies to support those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is now ensuring these pupils make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' safety awareness is good and they benefit from the good range of opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle. Nearly all pupils confirm that they feel safe at school. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and they show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They make a good contribution to the school and local community. There is an active and influential school council and older pupils 'buddy' younger pupils, and exercise the role of playground leaders in a responsible manner. There are church and parish links and the school's arts project involves the local community. All elements of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils spoke knowledgeably and sensitively about the different customs adopted by different religious and ethnic groups. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are some common strengths in teaching throughout the school. For example, relationships between staff and pupils are good, interactive whiteboards are well used to support learning, and teaching assistants work effectively to support pupils in lessons and in small groups. Most teachers also have good strategies to involve pupils through questioning, discussions in pairs and in getting pupils to share their understanding with the rest of the class.

In recent years pupils have experienced a lot of staff changes which have disrupted the teaching and adversely affected pupils' learning. While this problem has now lessened, there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. The teaching is not yet good enough to help pupils overcome earlier difficulties, particularly in their writing and in science. The use of assessment information is too inconsistent to ensure that work is pitched at the correct level for all groups of pupils in the often mixed-age classes. This is especially the case for the more-able who are not fully challenged.

The curriculum has a good range of school clubs, contributing well to pupils' enjoyment and the development of a healthy lifestyle. There are important strengths in the arts, music and in the personal, social and health education curriculum. However, the science curriculum is weak. While improving, some opportunities are still being missed to maximise the support provided for pupils in relation to writing.

The good relationships between adults and pupils promote a caring environment where all pupils and their needs are well known. Pupils appreciate the help they receive from adults. There is good use of outside agencies to support potentially vulnerable pupils and their families. Induction arrangements and transition arrangements to secondary school are well established and effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The experienced headteacher provides sound leadership, based on an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the main areas for improvement. After a considerable period of change and instability in staffing the school now has a full complement of permanent staff. The school has been slow to adopt a coherent system to assess and track pupils' progress but this is now happening for writing and mathematics, although not yet for science. The team leaders, while mostly new to their roles, are strengthening the school's capacity to implement improvements across the school in a consistent way. There is no complacency and the school is beginning to

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move in the right direction. The management of teaching and learning is now secure, based on regular, accurate monitoring by senior staff and the positive impact of the team leader in each key stage.

Until recently, the governing body focused largely on finance and conformance with statutory requirements, but not enough on the factors that affect on pupils' performance. As a result, the governing body has been successful in ensuring that the school's safeguarding procedures fully meet legal requirements. However, not enough attention was paid to strategic organisation, for example, the school's capacity to manage staff changes. The governing body now recognises it needs to strengthen its monitoring of pupils' performance. The school has effective ways of listening to and acting on pupils' concerns. Good use is made of partner organisations to provide additional support for pupils where needed. The school has forged good links with the other local primary schools and with the local secondary school.

The school works hard to form an effective partnership with parents. However, despite surveys it had not recognised the level of parental dissatisfaction related to staffing instability. The school is successful in dealing with the few incidences of unacceptable behaviour. However, the effectiveness of its positive measures to promote equality of opportunity is compromised by the weaker performance of boys and of more-able pupils. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily and enjoys good links with those in the neighbourhood. It has developed a draft policy on community cohesion and the creation of wider links is identified in the associated action plan.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Children join Reception with knowledge, understanding and skills that are close to expectations for their ages in most areas of learning. They are relatively strong in personal and social development, physical development and in their understanding of number. They are relatively weak in most aspects of early literacy, especially writing. They make good progress so that by the end of the Reception Year, their attainment is above national expectations in most areas of the curriculum.

An appropriate range of learning experiences is provided. There is a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was mostly good. Good relationships exist between the adults and parents. Some children also benefit from support from the work of outside agencies that work with a few families. Staff provide good care for the children.

The new leaders and managers have made a good start. Staff make frequent and careful observations of children's progress. There is a common sense of purpose in the team and a good emphasis on using the information from regular assessments to plan the next steps in children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Based on their response to the questionnaires and additional written comments, parents and carers are broadly satisfied with the school's work. They are particularly positive about the way the school keeps their children safe and helps them to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors' findings confirm these positive views. A small minority of parents do not feel their children are making enough progress and do not feel informed about progress. Inspector evidence supports parental concerns about the slow progress made by pupils in writing and science, but there are frequent consultations where parents are informed about their children's progress. In addition to the questions posed in the questionnaire a number of parents commented negatively about the high number of supply teachers. The school has taken action to address this matter but accepts that there have been problems with teacher instability in the past. This is because several teachers assumed new roles requiring them to engage in professional development in order to become fully effective. In this report, the governing body and senior managers are asked to take a more fundamental look at how staffing instability and its impacts can be reduced.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sutton CofE VC Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 283 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	59	24	35	4	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	57	29	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	42	31	46	5	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	39	35	52	5	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	24	38	36	53	4	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	37	35	52	5	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	43	38	56	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	26	37	55	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	37	39	58	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	28	43	64	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	32	39	58	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	46	32	47	5	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	51	27	40	6	9	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sutton CofE VC Primary School, Ely, CB6 2PU

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave my colleagues and I when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, visiting your classes and looking at your work. You helped us to get to know your school and this letter is to tell you what we found during the inspection. We have asked the governors and staff to make some urgent improvements. Here is a list of some of the good things we found out about your school.

The staff look after you well and almost all of you feel safe in school.

Your behaviour is good in lessons and elsewhere around the school.

You have a positive attitude towards having a healthy lifestyle.

We were impressed with the variety of after-school clubs that staff provide for you.

Children get off to a good start in Reception.

The headteacher and her staff are working hard to improve your school.

These are some of the improvements we have asked the staff to make:

- help you to make better progress, especially in writing and science
- make better use of the information they have on what you can already do to help you achieve your very best as you get older
- make sure that the checking done by all staff and the governors helps you understand better and make rapid improvements in your learning.

Inspectors will be visiting again, during the next year, to see how the school is dealing with these things. Please to continue to come to school each day and carry on behaving well so that you get the most from your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Jim Griffin

Lead inspector

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