

Sevenoaks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118551
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339239
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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 of pupils on the school roll	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Colins
Headteacher	Alan Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Approximately 60% of the inspectors' time was spent looking at learning. The inspectors visited 21 lessons taught by 15 different teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school development plan, records of lesson observations, safeguarding material, records of assessment and welfare arrangements. The responses to 215 questionnaires returned by parents or carers were analysed.

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

- the achievement of all groups, especially vulnerable groups of pupils, to establish whether teaching took sufficient account of their needs
- how successful all managers and leaders were at driving the school forward in their designated roles
- how the provision made by the school, in its care, guidance and support, translated into personal development outcomes
- the quality and effectiveness of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation, with reference to the school's capacity to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. The school population is largely from an all-White British background. However, recently, the proportion of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds has gradually increased. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average and can be as high as half of a year group. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The school has a wide range of awards for its sporting achievements and aspects of the curriculum. These include a Healthy Schools award and Activemark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Main findings Sevenoaks Primary is an outstanding school with many strengths. After making a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the progress and achievement of pupils, including vulnerable groups, is outstanding. There is an upward trend in standards and evidence confirms that the current Year 6 pupils are on course to improve on the above average standards reached last year. This is due in no small measure to the outstanding teaching of an excellent curriculum. A key strength is the excellence of pastoral care. This is exemplified in the way that all adults work together to ensure that pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of all that the school has to offer. Whenever necessary, external agencies are used very effectively to support this work. The result of this exceptionally caring ethos ensures that pupils are developing into thoughtful and considerate young people who have a mature sense of their place in society. This is supported by excellent partnership links including those with local schools, such as the use of specialist sports expertise. While pupils' personal development is excellent overall, their understanding of the United Kingdom as a culturally diverse society is relatively weaker. Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment and exemplary behaviour. In one example seen, pupils just could not wait to get to grips with writing a play. Teachers provide a wide range of tasks to suit the range of abilities in their classes and the way that the school divides its classes by ability for mathematics is having a very positive effect on learning. In most of the teaching, marking is focused very well on giving pupils clear pointers for improvement, although in a very small minority of teaching, this focus is not quite as sharp. The school's senior leadership has been able to engage very effectively with a very wide cross-section of staff by creating several leadership teams. There is clearly a corporate desire to provide the best for all pupils. A number of initiatives have been successfully established, such as work on helping pupils with sounds and letters, the raising of the quality of teaching and learning, and improved engagement with parents and carers. However, initiatives are not always regularly enough checked by key personnel to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the school and are providing the best outcomes. The headteacher has instilled a true sense of teamwork through his management structure and this links closely to the way in which the governing body now takes on its tasks and meets its obligations. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and consequently, there has been a good improvement since the last inspection. However, the recently formed leadership teams are not yet fully involved in monitoring and evaluation, indicating that, although the school's capacity to sustain improvements is good, it is not yet outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Place a stronger focus on monitoring the outcomes of school initiatives at a class level by:-
 - - shifting the emphasis of lesson observations to encompass current initiatives
 - - ensuring that the wider group of middle leaders have opportunities to monitor initiatives, especially those in which they have been involved.
- Enhance pupils' understanding of their place in a culturally diverse society by
 - ? giving pupils more opportunities to experience such diversity, including implementing links for twinning with a similar, but culturally different, school in London.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Data show that standards are rising and that all groups of pupils make exceptionally good progress. Enthusiastic learning, linked with excellent attitudes shown by pupils, adds much to their rates of progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same excellent progress due to the help they receive in one-to-one situations and in small groups within the class. Some of these pupils are making exceptional progress in relation to their abilities, with most of them reaching the levels expected for all pupils of their age. All groups of pupils, including the most vulnerable, and the increasing proportion from different ethnic backgrounds, show excellent achievement. Pupils perform well in class, showing excellent attitudes to their work, being keen to learn, responsive to questions and adding to their own progress by their conscientious approach to learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They say they feel safe and were 'kept too safe' in relation to playing in the snow, at a time when the school was only kept open by the concerted efforts of teachers and parents with shovels and brushes. Pupils work hard and show exuberance when exciting prospects for learning are mentioned. They behave very well in class and at play, looking after each other and playing sensibly. Pupils have high levels of awareness of healthy lifestyles. A group of older girls were seen at lunchtime teaching younger ones skipping exercises. Many take advantage of the 45 after-school clubs, many of which are sport-related. Pupils are justly proud of their school and take their responsibilities seriously, often taking part in school events both near and further afield. Pupils contribute readily to their community both in and out of school. Their readiness for the next stage of their education and for their own economic well-being is good, as shown by the above average standards they reach. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social skills are highly developed overall, although their understanding of the multicultural make-up of the United Kingdom is relatively weaker.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The majority of the teaching is outstanding overall and most of the teaching has very strong features that significantly enhance learning. One parent notes: 'I am amazed that the quality and standard of teaching is so high.' Relationships are outstanding and there is a clear atmosphere of keenness as pupils want to do well for themselves and their teachers. Although occasionally lacking in focus, marking is mostly very effective in showing pupils how they can improve. Pupils enjoy all aspects of their learning, from the key skills of literacy and numeracy to the exciting additional lessons of tennis provided by outside professionals. The very effective teaching of lessons in which several subjects have been drawn together stimulates learning and provides an increasing number of creative opportunities for pupils, matched well to their needs. French, art and many aspects of physical education are taught particularly well across the school, providing much enjoyment for pupils and good and sometimes outstanding outcomes. A map of the curriculum has been created for each pupil recognising and fully addressing their specific needs. Special days and weeks are devoted to elements of the curriculum such as art and health education, which further stimulates learning and enjoyment. Regular pupils' review meetings and regular assessments ensure that all pupils are carefully watched to ensure they make appropriate progress. Vulnerable groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with pupils who are gifted or talented, are very well catered for in teachers' planning and through the well-constructed curriculum. Their needs are noted at an early opportunity and their progress and support are exceptionally well managed, so that their progress is as rapid as other pupils by Year 6. Parents and carers very much appreciate the school's caring

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ethos. Many send their children to the school’s own breakfast club, ensuring they have a good start to the day. Staff with designated responsibilities ensure that there are excellent links to outside support agencies for parents and pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong sense of shared responsibility and commitment amongst all staff, which emanates from the good leadership and very effective management of the headteacher. This is exemplified by comments in the staff questionnaires. The monitoring of teaching by the headteacher is thorough and has led to significant improvements being made. However, the newly formed middle leadership teams are not yet fully involved in the school’s monitoring and evaluation. The successful drive for improvements in standards and in personal development has resulted in initiatives that effectively enhance learning. The governing body has a very firm grasp of its strengths and areas for development. It is very well organised and has very good systems in place for monitoring. They both challenge and support very effectively. All groups of pupils make the same excellent progress, demonstrating the school’s outstanding quest and success in ensuring equal opportunities for all. In addition to the other outstanding partnerships, links with parents and carers are truly excellent and the exceptionally positive questionnaires bear witness to this. The school has made a good start in promoting the idea of community cohesion. While this is very positive in the school and local community, and in links made with a school in France, it has not been as successful in developing its links with another and different school in the United Kingdom. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures were extremely thorough. Procedures are regularly under review; staff are very well trained and regularly updated. Risk assessments and health and safety procedures are very firmly in place and office systems for logging all of the above are conscientiously kept.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children clearly enjoy learning and their achievement is good. Parents and carers especially appreciate the home and school visits before school starts, helping children to settle and understand routines. Children make particularly good progress in their personal and social development from low starting points, including the growing proportion of children from different ethnic groups. Reading and writing remain relatively weaker, both on entry and when transferring to Year 1. Assessment of progress is carried out very thoroughly and is used to inform teachers' planning. There is a good balance between activities directed by teachers and those initiated by children themselves. Teaching itself is good and consistently so in both classes, with support staff giving effective support to learning in a wide range of lessons. The outside area is a strength of the provision here and has helped children make very good progress in their physical development. It supports a very good range of physical activities. Safeguarding and care overall are exemplary. Relationships are excellent and activities are well planned for the range of children's abilities. New leadership has had a very positive impact in securing rapid improvement over the past two years, notably in improving assessment and the curriculum and in ensuring consistently good teaching across both classes. Consequently, progress and standards have improved year on year, as has the independence of learners, during this period. These improvements have been secured at a time when provision has had to adapt to meet the needs of a greater number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. New policies and practices are now well established, for example the very effective approach to teaching letter sounds.

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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	1

Views of parents and carers

The return of questionnaires was very high from parents and carers, although not all were completed fully. They were overwhelmingly positive about the provision the school makes for their children. All who responded felt their children were kept safe and that the school helped them have a healthy lifestyle. Almost all felt that teaching was good and that the school was led effectively. A very small number were concerned that their views were not heard or that the school did not meet the needs of their children. Inspectors felt that the creation of the Parent Council and the excellent care, guidance and support for pupils did not confirm these comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	145	67	61	28	5	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	147	68	64	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	105	49	100	47	6	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	110	51	91	42	5	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	130	60	77	36	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	121	56	84	39	7	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	143	67	68	32	1	0	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)	105	49	78	36	7	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	112	52	88	41	10	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	107	50	89	41	8	4	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	97	45	91	42	13	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	150	70	56	26	3	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	156	73	48	22	6	3	1	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.



1 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sevenoaks Primary School, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3LB

Thank you for your help when we visited your school for its recent inspection. You are justly proud of your school and sharing your views with us was very helpful.

Here are some of the highlights we saw on our visit.

- The progress you all make is outstanding and you thoroughly enjoy learning
- Your curriculum is both very exciting and interesting.
- The teaching is excellent.
- The care, guidance and support you get from adults are outstanding.
- Your own behaviour, understanding of how to be healthy and your support of your school community are excellent.
- Governors play their part in school life very well and the school's links with parents and carers and other groups are excellent.

The school now needs to:

- help you understand what it is like to be a child in other parts of the United Kingdom
- check more carefully how successful the school's ideas for improvement are progressing and fully involve more staff in doing this.

I am sure that you will continue to do your best to keep up the high levels of progress you are making in your work.

Thank you again for such an interesting visit.

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones Lead inspector

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