

Sutton-at-Hone Church of England (VA) Primary School

Church Road, Dartford, Kent, DA4 9EX

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils join the school performing in line with age-related expectations. With good teaching, they achieve well and attain scores in mathematics tests which are significantly above the national average by the end of Year 6.
- Attainment in English has been broadly in line with the national average, but rigorous teacher assessment shows that increasing proportions of older pupils are now making better-than-expected progress and achieving well in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils speak positively about their school, behave well, have a clear sense of right and wrong and treat adults and each other with courtesy. It is a safe and secure environment.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about units of work based on broad topics.
- Teaching over time is good, especially in mathematics and in Key Stage 2, because activities are well planned to match individuals' needs, carefully marked and involve pupils in recording their own progress.
- The headteacher has a good understanding of what needs to be done to further improve the school, monitoring teaching rigorously to make effective changes to the pace with which pupils learn and their involvement in lessons. Staff and governors share her vision and ambition.
- Governors make sure that they are well informed and are prepared to challenge as well as support school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in subjects other than English does not encourage pupils to write extensively. It is not always clear to pupils the precise steps that need to be taken to improve their work in these subjects.
- While many teaching assistants offer focused guidance in lessons, not all adults working with the youngest children are helping pupils to make maximum progress.
- Communication with parents about how they could support and extend their children's learning is not as effective as it could be.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent a total of nine hours observing 16 lessons, or parts of lessons. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher. Additional activities included observations of class and whole-school assemblies, the after-school and breakfast clubs as well as the way in which indoor break was managed when snow prevented outdoor play.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and local authority as well as with senior leaders and subject coordinators.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as views communicated by letter and through informal discussions with parents and carers during the inspection. They also took account of the views of staff through meetings and the responses to 27 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised samples of their work books.
- Inspectors looked at the school's own attainment records for current as well previous academic years in addition to published data on pupil achievement. They examined planning and monitoring documents, records relating to pupil safety and welfare, including the school's single central record of checks on staff, behaviour logs and attendance data.

Inspection team

Patricia MacLachlan, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Teresa Davies	Additional inspector
Clifford Walker	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in one Reception class and another joint Reception/Year 1 class.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals has been rising over the past three years but the proportion remains lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra money provided by the government) is lower than the national average.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The largest group in the school is of White British heritage.
- A slightly higher-than-average proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is supported at school action. However, the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school meets the floor standards set by the government as the minimum standards for attainment and progress.
- The school provides additional services through a breakfast and an after-school club managed by the governing body. At the time of the previous inspection the school was part of a federation led by an executive headteacher from another school. In September 2012, the governing body appointed its own substantive headteacher and the federation has been dissolved. Nonetheless, the two schools continue to collaborate on school improvement activities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate improvements in teaching and increase the proportion that is outstanding over time by:
 - planning tasks that challenge learners to respond with high quality writing in all areas of the curriculum
 - embedding some of the very strong assessment practices seen in mathematics and English in other subjects across the whole school
 - equipping all the additional adults in the classroom with the skills to focus their support on learning by developing their questioning skills, especially in the early years, so that pupils have to explain themselves more.
- Involve more parents in supporting learning and understanding assessment by:
 - extending the series of parent workshops to include more opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their good responses to projects
 - developing more effective ways of communicating with parents about the ways in which they can support their children's learning in and beyond the school day.

Inspection judgements

Achievement

is good

- Attainment on entry to Reception is broadly in line with expectations of four-year-olds nationally. In this first year in the school, pupils achieve in line with national expectations and most strongly in linking sounds to letters and counting. By the time pupils leave the school at eleven there is a trend of significantly higher attainment in mathematics than the national average because teaching is good and expectations are high.
- In English, pupils have attained in line with national averages in Year 2 and Year 6. However, increasing proportions of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making good progress over the course of these years because more ambitious targets are being set. Teachers are also very careful to make sure that pupils understand their work and give detailed advice on how to improve. As a result, school records and scrutiny of English books show that more pupils are on now on track to exceed national averages by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides tailored support, well matched to individual needs and, as a result, by the end of Year 6 there are no significant differences between the achievement of groups of pupils with disabilities and special education needs and their peers.
- The pupil premium grant is provided by the government to fund extra support for pupils eligible for free school meals. In this school it is used to pay for small group activities in reading, writing and mathematics and as a result the majority of pupils in this category are now making good progress.
- Younger pupils recognise sounds and letters and link them (known as using phonics) to read accurately because they are well taught. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading and it was at their suggestion that the school library stays open on two evenings a week for families to browse and select books together.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good because well-planned tasks offer pupils briskly paced opportunities to solve realistic problems. Year 3/4 pupils, for example, were challenged to find different ways of scoring a maximum total in a darts game and then explain their multiplication and subtraction methods. This promoted progress through reasoned discussions rather than arid calculations.
- Pupils are enthused by projects such as the Writing Tunnel where high quality English work from all classes is chosen to show how it has met success criteria. Pupils are also adept at discussing whether their writing has met improvement targets because teachers mark work very clearly and encourage them to keep helpful records of their own progress.
- Planning is thorough and capable subject leaders check that sequences of lessons offer more challenging tasks for pupils who are capable of moving at a faster pace. The best teachers also re-shape tasks quickly if pupils are not succeeding, so that material can be learned at their own pace.
- School leaders' own evaluation of teaching as good is broadly accurate, and focused coaching has enabled some teachers to improve rapidly.
- In Reception some good practice was seen, for example, when all adults used open questions to promote children's vivid oral descriptions of their activities making dinosaur footprints or models. However, not all the adults who work with young children support learning so skilfully.
- Teachers have generated great enthusiasm by planning units like 'Enterprise', incorporating art, technology, maths and personal development, but more extended writing and systematic marking of topic books would improve the impact of this work on pupils' progress.
- The majority of parents and carers believe that their children are well taught and receive appropriate homework for their age. However, a sizeable minority of parents are not yet convinced by the home-learning policy and the school could do more to involve them in pupil learning beyond the classroom.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, especially in Years 2 to 6, because they are very proud of house points collected for their good behaviour and achievements. Pupils' expectations of each other are high and a good rapport with their teachers is evident in lessons.
- Movement around the school is calm and pupils show consideration towards each other in the playground. Pupils are consistently polite and welcoming to visitors.
- They show respect towards each other and value differences, quoting the school's Christian values that mean 'we learn that we are all unique'. Pupils are happy to take shy or newly arrived peers under their wings.
- The school monitors behaviour well and has demonstrated a rapid improvement since 2011 so that there are now no exclusions and very low levels of poor behaviour. Bullying is rare and pupils say that it is dealt with effectively if it occurs.
- Parents and carers express confidence that their children are safe and well looked after in this school. 'It is the safest place on earth', in the words of one pupil.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are well supervised.
- Attendance is in line with the national average and the work of the parent support adviser is having an effect on reducing habitual absences.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because at times in Reception some pupils are inattentive because behaviour is not managed consistently well and this restricts their progress.

The leadership and management are good

- The areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. High-attaining pupils are set tasks that challenge them. Governors are more involved in monitoring improvements in pupil achievement and in teaching. Subject leaders, particularly in mathematics, check colleagues' work and coach them to improve the quality of teaching. The dip in English test scores in 2011 has been reversed and progress is accelerating in Key Stage 2.
- The newly appointed headteacher has introduced a robust system for monitoring teaching, and this has made an impact, particularly in Key Stage 2, on improving classroom practice. The school improvement plan assesses strengths and weaknesses accurately. The priorities are to increase the pace of pupil progress and make further improvements to the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding.
- Provision to encourage spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are unselfconscious about expressing the school's Christian values and using the reflection area to consider their responses to events.
- Pupils express moral viewpoints and are proud to have developed links with a partner school in The Gambia that give insight into another culture. They are respectful and curious about other religions. Opportunities to learn to work in teams, such as in the enterprise project, are relished.
- Management of the Early Years Foundation Stage shows a good understanding and tracking of assessment at this age, together with good learning journals and arrangements for transition to the school from local nurseries.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school during the transition from federation to autonomous status by arranging mentoring for the new headteacher as well as by providing training for the governing body and subject leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
The governing body knows the standards of achievement and teaching in the school because the headteacher's reports on these matters are discussed and challenged in their meetings. There is governor involvement in drawing up the improvement plan based on an accurate understanding of how pupils are performing compared to national standards. Senior leaders make reports to governors each term about their lesson observations. These are supplemented by governors' own monthly visits to classes. Minutes show that the debate in governing body meetings is well

informed and challenging. The governing body is reviewing the school's appraisal policy to include a clearer link between teachers' pay progression and their pupils' progress. Checks that the pupil premium funds are spent on the intended group are made because the headteacher presents annual reports on the impact that the funds have made. Oversight of safeguarding is effective and representatives of the governing body attend staff training days in the school on this and other matters. A detailed programme of training has been drawn up to equip governors to make effective contributions to monitoring financial, special needs and behaviour policies. Governors participate in working parties that contribute to improving home –school links. For example they were active in a project with staff, pupils and parents that introduced home-learning themes

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118850
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	405820

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	411
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Harbud
Headteacher	Leah Goulding
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 November 2010
Telephone number	01322 862147
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