

Little Sutton Church of England Primary School

Berwick Road, Little Sutton, South Wirral, Cheshire, CH66 4PP

Inspection dates 27–28 February 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Under the clear and focused leadership of the headteacher and with effective governance the school is showing clear improvement since its last inspection. This is reflected in increasing pupil admissions.
- The attainment of pupils is rising and evidence points to improving results across the school, including those of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers now expect more of their pupils and they work well with teaching assistants to help pupils to do their best.
- Behaviour is outstanding and pupils are focused on learning because they enjoy their lessons. Attendance is high because pupils love going to school.
- The headteacher has set up successful systems for checking teaching and learning, and teachers are held to account for meeting the needs of the school and its pupils. At the same time their own professional development is given a high priority.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in mathematics are not as high as those in reading and writing, especially for more able pupils.
- The headteacher is restricted by the fact that she does not have a deputy or assistant headteacher to share leadership roles and responsibilities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector saw a total of seven lessons, observing each of the six teachers together with a lesson that had a specific focus on the use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- The inspector listened to pupils read and looked at samples of work produced by each class.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority's link adviser. A discussion was held with the School Improvement Partner by telephone. The views of staff were gained from the staff questionnaire and from conversations.
- The views of the 33 responses to the on-line Parent View survey were taken into account.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including analysis of pupils' progress undertaken by the school and by the local authority, teachers' planning and assessment, schemes of work, the school's self-assessment and development planning. Key policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding, were also examined.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average primary school. Numbers have been falling in recent years, but this trend has now been reversed with increasing numbers joining the school in Reception.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, as are the numbers at school action plus. There are currently no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority or are the children of armed service families) are below average.
- Nearly all pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- There is a breakfast club run by the governing body that meets every morning before school.
- No pupils are educated off-site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum acceptable standards for progress and achievement in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review leadership and management arrangements and increase the support available to the headteacher in running the school.
- Further raise standards in mathematics throughout the school by:
 - ensuring harder work is set for more-able pupils
 - supporting teachers to enhance their skills in teaching mathematics through professional development opportunities
 - enabling all pupils to achieve the standards expected of them through individually targeted support.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Reception with skills similar to those expected for their age. However, in recent years there has been a significant increase in numbers who start with the skills that will later help to promote reading, writing and mathematics that are below those usually found. Good teaching enables them to make good any deficits.
- Reading is taught well and pupils develop a strong understanding of the relationships between letters and the sound they make, quickly becoming confident readers. This was well illustrated in a Year 1 lesson where the pace of the lesson, excellent use of the interactive whiteboard and the teacher's skilful grouping of pupils enabled them to do well.
- During Years 1 and 2, the vast majority of pupils make the amount of progress expected nationally and a significant number make better than expected progress.
- By the end of Year 6 standards are higher than those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Mathematics is not as strong as the other areas. The school recognises this and is putting steps in place to address the issue. There remains scope to increase the proportion of pupils gaining higher standards.
- By the end of Year 6 virtually every pupil has made the progress expected of them and over a third have made progress at a faster rate than might have been expected from where they were at the end of Year 2.
- The early identification of pupils who need additional help supports them in class. It also means that pupils with special educational needs can be identified and helped. Careful checking shows they make good progress and narrow their gap in standards reached.
- The standards reached by pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium show the same pattern. In mathematics the standards they reached last year were actually higher than for other pupils, but in English they are a little behind. The school has worked well with other local schools to develop a tracking grid that shows clearly how this group is doing.
- This improving pattern of achievement is the result of better use of tracking data, and teachers enhanced ability to measure the level at which pupils are working. There has been a whole-school effort to develop teachers' skills in judging pupils' work against national standards. This means teachers can now better identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and more ably identify individual needs and maximise the challenge provided for every pupil.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good right through from Reception and some is outstanding. Teachers work well with classroom assistants and this helps to target additional help for pupils who need it. In turn, this helps pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.
- However, teaching is not yet outstanding because it does not result in more pupils gaining the higher levels than it currently does.
- Pupils' progress is recorded carefully and entered into the school's tracking system timely. Pupil progress meetings with the headteacher identify those not doing as well as they might, or those with additional needs. This group of potentially vulnerable pupils becomes the focus for individualised help to improve their progress.
- Because teachers have enhanced their skills in measuring progress they are more effective in meeting individual needs. Work in all lessons is now varied to meet the various levels of ability in the class, enabling every pupil to do their best. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do well because their needs are so well understood. This enables them to make good progress and narrow the gap in performance with other pupils.
- This is reflected in the improving results in English and mathematics, as well as good quality

work in topic-based lessons. These topics provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills across a variety of lessons and reflect excellent lesson planning that ensures all areas of learning are covered.

- Teachers' skilful use of questioning fully involves pupils in lessons. The impressive use of 'talk partners' as a way of getting them to think more deeply about their work has been a tremendous success. It is common to see pupils checking their own work and that of classmates, and discussing the successes and areas for development.
- Teachers' marking is clear and, as well as praising good work, gives advice on how it could be further improved.
- Pupils concentrate hard and enjoy their learning. Often this is enhanced through good use of ICT, such as in the lesson where pupils put together a 'tourist information' film which reflected the knowledge gained from a topic on the River Nile.
- The school ensures that its pupil premium funding is carefully targeted to support those for whom it is intended and is helping this group to make good gains in their knowledge. Funding has gone to help pay for trips and visits that enrich learning in the classroom and that would otherwise attract a charge or on targeted help for individuals from teaching assistants.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Discussions with pupils show how very much they enjoy school which is seen in their exemplary attitudes to learning. It means virtually no time is lost in lessons.
- They are emphatic in saying what a friendly place the school is, where everyone gets on well. Year 6 pupils enjoy opportunities to act as play leaders and acting as 'buddies' for the younger ones, reflecting this very positive attitude.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They show excellent conduct, manners and punctuality. Strong social relationships are evidence of their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, as are the colourful displays of art around the school, often reflecting a range of world cultures.
- As a consequence, it is not surprising that pupils insist that bullying is not an issue, although they are aware of the different types of bullying, the dangers of cyber-bullying and the misuse of internet and social networking sites.
- The school's clear and consistently applied policies for behaviour and for eliminating bullying are understood by pupils. Positive behaviour is reinforced through a system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils say that when incidents do arise staff deal with them quickly and well.
- However, a significant proportion of responses to the Parent View website did raise concerns around bullying and behaviour. The inspector investigated these, talking to pupils and staff, and examining the incident log. Evidence suggests that such concerns are not well-founded.
- The day starts with the well-organised and popular breakfast club. It not only ensures pupils have something to eat and drink before lessons start, but also provides a range of popular activities.
- Attendance is high because pupils enjoy coming to school, where they feel safe and where they learn in a highly supportive environment.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been determined to raise standards and reverse the previously declining numbers coming into the school right through from Reception. She has been successful and has created a positive atmosphere that is reflected in the commitment of staff.
- Currently the headteacher is not supported by a deputy or assistant headteacher. This is a heavy burden that prevents leadership being judged outstanding at the moment.
- That said, she is well supported by two teachers who are on the upper pay scale as key subject coordinators and members of the senior leadership team.

- The evaluation of teachers and the setting of annual performance targets are thorough. It includes opportunities for teachers to check their own performance. Links between performance, pay and promotion are clear. The monitoring of teaching, planning and marking is rigorous and the headteacher is well supported by senior subject leaders in this work.
- A significant number of responses to Parent View expressed dissatisfaction with elements of leadership of the school. The inspector investigated these issues with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner and the local authority. It is clear that the overwhelming professional view is that the school's leadership is underpinning improvement and rising standards and that such concerns are not justified.
- Teaching through interesting topics allows all pupils to learn effectively, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The focus on meeting the needs of every pupil also reflects the strong commitment to providing equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination throughout the school.
- Procedures for safeguarding are good, including staff vetting, the identification of children at risk, and working alongside other professional agencies.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school to help it raise standards in recent years, for example, in supporting initiatives for staff development. The school has also benefited from being in a partnership of local schools in which it has been an active participant, able to gain from training and the sharing of good professional practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well led and does a good job. Governors are well-trained and carry out their legal responsibilities, including checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and arrangements for safeguarding. They understand the pupil performance data, they know how the school compares to others and how those pupils who attract the pupil premium funding perform compared to similar pupils elsewhere. They carry out their duty to check the performance of the headteacher well and they are aware of the arrangements for managing teacher performance, including the links to pay. They monitor funding and financial arrangements effectively.

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	111275
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	405327

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	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Whittlestone
Headteacher	Joanne Pitchford
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2011
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