

Sydenham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130868
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	360141
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Naylor
Executive Headteacher	Juliette Westwood
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were seen and nine teachers were observed. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. The school's work and a wide range of documentation were reviewed. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and pupils and from 83 parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The strength of pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2.
- The progress of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.
- How well teachers ensure that work is matched to meet pupils' abilities.
- The key features of the school's promotion of community cohesion.

Information about the school

Sydenham is an average-sized primary school that serves a diverse area in Leamington Spa. Most pupils live close to the school, although many families that have moved out of the immediate vicinity keep their children at the school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is double the national average. Currently, about half the pupils are of White British heritage. Others come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest of which is Asian or Asian British-Indian heritage. About a third of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is double the national average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The school has a designated resource base for five pupils with specific learning difficulties. There is a much higher than average number of pupils entering and leaving the school at times other than normal admission dates. For example, fewer than half the current Year 6 pupils have been in the school since Year 1.

The Sydenham Children's Centre and the Purple Playhouse, a pre-school nursery, share the school site. Both are managed separately from the school and were not inspected as part of this inspection. The school has a breakfast club which provides care each day. This provision is managed by the governing body and was included in this inspection.

In September 2010 the school formed a 'hard' federation with Lighthorne Heath Primary School. The executive headteacher has responsibility for both schools and is supported by an associate headteacher in each school. The federated schools share a governing body. The school has gained a wide range of awards including the Artsmark Gold and the International School award.

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

1

Main findings

Under the inspirational leadership of the executive headteacher, the school's overall effectiveness has been lifted to outstanding. The school provides an exciting and stimulating curriculum which inspires the pupils and enables them to achieve well. They make good progress in their academic development and, due to the outstanding levels of care guidance and support, they thrive in their personal development. The unswerving commitment of all the staff to treat each pupil as an individual means that all are enabled to be included in all the school has to offer. This also results in pupils feeling very safe and free from discrimination. This highly cohesive community also stems from the many ways in which pupils' heritage and cultures are celebrated and enjoyed. The pupils respond very well to the many opportunities available for them to take responsibility and they have an outstanding understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are unanimous in saying that they enjoy school, and particularly enjoy learning because, 'Our teachers really help us and lessons are never boring.' Even when pupils occasionally present challenging behaviour, this is managed exceptionally well and overall, behaviour is good. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are usually highly positive, although this is not reflected in their attendance, which has risen recently in response to effective school initiatives but is still at the national average.

Parents and carers are unanimous in saying that they are happy with their children's experience at the school, and a number of them actively sought out the inspectors to explain how pleased they are with all aspects of the school. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those whose children attend the resource base, are especially impressed with the programmes that the school puts into place to ensure their children's needs are met.

Learning and progress are good. Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are low in comparison to those expected nationally for their age. Due to good provision, they achieve well in all areas of learning. Even so, by the time that they enter Year 1, only a minority of pupils reach the expected goals. In Years 1 and 2 progress continues to be good for all groups of pupils although overall attainment at the end of Year 2 is hampered, particularly in reading and writing, by the pupils' less well developed speaking and listening skills. Progress continues to be good in Years 3 to 6 because, here too, teaching is good. All classes generally present with a calm and purposeful atmosphere because teachers manage the pupils well. However, even though some lessons are outstanding, some are no better than satisfactory. This is because teachers do not always make the best use of assessment information

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to ensure that work is challenging for all groups of pupils.

Pupils are supported exceptionally well by the specialist teaching staff and assistants, both in lessons and in withdrawal groups either outside the classroom or in the resource base. The skilled small group and individual support for those who find learning hard and those at an early stage of learning English results in both these groups of pupils making outstanding progress.

These things do not happen by chance! The executive headteacher is expertly supported by the associate headteacher and senior leaders. Her deep and passionate vision to realise the best for all pupils is shared by all the staff and the governing body. Staff morale is high and they work closely as a team. Leadership at all levels is outstanding and rigorous, and close monitoring of provision and pupils' progress by staff and the governing body means that the learning improvement plan focuses exceptionally well on areas to be further improved. There is an outstanding capacity for further improvement. This is illustrated by the school's record of sustaining the many outstanding features found at the previous inspection and also in improvements made. A further clear example of the whole staff's capacity lies in the way in which both they and the governing body have taken the federation with another school in their stride.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop more consistency in the quality of teaching and learning to move it from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used effectively in all lessons to match activities to pupils' learning needs
 - seeking all opportunities to extend pupils' speaking skills.
- Build on the effective initiatives to raise attendance so that by September 2012, it is above national average levels.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are highly motivated and keen to do well. On entry to Year 1 attainment is particularly low in communication, language and literacy. The strong thrust to develop pupils' skills in the use of letters and sounds is starting to pay dividends and this is resulting in progress in reading and writing being stronger than in the past. Despite this, attainment remains stubbornly below average at the end of Year 2, though inspection findings and the school's data confirm that attainment is being lifted. In mathematics, pupils' calculation skills are secure but they are less confident in applying their knowledge in practical situations. Nonetheless, in a very effective Year 1 lesson pupils were able to describe properties of three-dimensional shapes and sort them effectively. The teacher's focus on strengthening the technical language that was copied and used by the pupils enabled these pupils to progress exceptionally well. Pupils made good progress in most lessons in Years 3 to 6 during the inspection and learning continues to be good. In consequence, by the time they

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reach Year 6 attainment is broadly at the national average, and last year’s national test results in English were slightly above average. The large majority of current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain the level expected nationally at the age of 11, particularly in mathematics. Just occasionally, pupils make only satisfactory progress because the activities set for different ability groups do not inspire them all to aim high. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those in the resource base who have specific learning difficulties make particularly strong progress. They invariably reach the demanding targets in their individual education plans.

Pupils thrive in the nurturing atmosphere of the school and they are appreciative of what the school provides for them. They are thoughtful and reflective, assertive and confident. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their well-developed personal skills and progress in learning, when linked to good information and communication technology skills, ensure that they are getting a good grounding for the future.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
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	2
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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage the pupils well and establish warm and positive relationships. They plan interesting and challenging activities and ensure that pupils know exactly what they are learning and what they need to do to meet the success criteria. This was particularly evident in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson when the pupils were focusing on improving descriptive vocabulary. Because the teacher’s explanations were of high quality and she excited the pupils by showing them a visual on-line

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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thesaurus which provided a wide range of vocabulary, pupils were very keen to start to find ambitious words to produce a written description of an Indian market. Progress in this lesson was rapid and secure. However, in a few lessons teachers' spend too much time talking to the pupils rather than encouraging discussion, and assessments are not always used well to ensure that work is matched to individual needs. The excellent quality of teaching for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English ensures that these pupils make rapid gains in English, and this soon enables them to become fully participating members of the class.

The curriculum is exemplary. Topic themes are carefully chosen to broaden pupils' horizons and also to celebrate other cultures exceptionally well. The current India topic, for example, enables those pupils of Indian heritage to learn about life in India, and this is complemented by the close links that the school has with a school in India. Subjects are linked together exceptionally well. For example, as part of the Black History month topic, a parent who is Nigerian and a pharmacist visited and explained her work to the pupils. Both literacy and numeracy work is woven into topic planning exceptionally well. The curriculum is enhanced by a plethora of visitors and visits out of the school which engage and enliven learning. There is an exceptionally broad range of after-school activities including Portuguese, Polish and Punjabi clubs. The school's Artsmark Gold, re-accredited for the third time, reflects the excellent programme for the arts, particularly in art and music.

Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that all pupils are supported well. Staff support pupils and their families exceptionally well. Pupils new to the school say that they are made very welcome, and they thoroughly appreciate their buddy's support as they begin to learn English and are inducted into the school. Very close links are established with the on-site Children's Centre and the school works closely with parents and carers and a wide range of outside agencies to enable it to make the best possible provision. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the high quality breakfast club which provides care before school. Even though arrangements to promote high attendance are exemplary, these have only recently had a positive impact and brought rates of attendance to average levels.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The executive headteacher is fully committed and highly skilled. Leadership roles are developed highly effectively. There is a clear vision for the school and its future and

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staff have recognised the benefits of federating with the partner school and are keen to learn from that school as well as offering the many talents of Sydenham staff. The associate headteacher of the partner school was a senior leader at Sydenham and the cross-school senior leadership team is already well established. Equality of opportunity is promoted highly effectively. The school ensures that pupils, whatever their ethnic or cultural background, or their ability, are valued highly and are free from discrimination. Pupils’ health and safety are at the heart of the school’s vision, and hence safeguarding arrangements are exceptionally thorough and vetting procedures exemplary. Excellent use is made of a texting service to check and update parents and carers regarding pupils’ well-being. Community cohesion is promoted exceptionally well. The school has close links with the local community, including both Christian and Sikh community groups. There are strong links with the federated school, which is a contrasting small village school. The global dimension is promoted exceptionally well and this is recognised in the gaining of the International School award. Regular visits to and from a school in India include exchanges of work between pupils. There are also links with China and Poland. The governing body, although re-constituted when the federation was established, has an excellent overview of the school’s direction and the priorities which they help to formulate. Regular visits, reports and meetings with staff mean that they are able to be highly effective in supporting the school while holding it to account.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Reception class because staff rightly place their well-being at the heart of the provision. Carefully orchestrated induction procedures ensure that the children settle quickly, learn to play happily with each other and rapidly realise the importance of sharing and taking turns. They behave

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well. Staff are particularly successful in ensuring the large number of children who speak little English at the start of school are supported well to enable them to join in activities. Teaching is good and this leads to good progress in learning, even though few reach the expected goals at the end of the year. The staff prepare stimulating and exciting activities that capture the children's interest well. They gained much enjoyment, for example, from the pirate ship and cave which promoted enthusiastic discussion and gave rise to some quality writing of messages to put in a bottle. Children are provided with a good balance of activities between those that are directed by the teacher and those that they choose for themselves. The outside area has been developed and extended since the previous inspection and now provides a rich learning environment. Assessment and recording procedures are effective in ensuring all individual children's needs are met. However, the 'learning journey' for each child is not always linked to specific aspects of an area of learning in order to clarify important next steps.

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

An above average proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They were unanimous in responding positively to most of the questions raised. Many made positive comments about how content they are with the school and how happy that they chose the school for their children. The very small number of individual concerns were taken up with the school but followed no particular pattern. Many of the written comments focused on the nurturing atmosphere, the strong links between the school and families, and the quality of the leadership of the executive headteacher. These are summarised by the comment: 'This is a wonderful school. It has given my child the best start she could have had. It feels homely and friendly. It is brilliantly run by the headteacher and the teachers are superb.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sydenham 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 200 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	69	25	30	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	77	19	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	47	57	36	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	64	29	35	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	72	23	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	51	61	31	37	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	66	28	34	0	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)	51	61	28	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	48	58	34	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	57	31	37	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	60	29	35	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	66	25	30	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	64	77	19	23	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



20 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sydenham Primary School, Leamington Spa, CV31 1SA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you working hard in lessons and getting on so well together. We were particularly impressed with all the wonderful displays of your work around the school. The many of you who were kind enough to speak to us showed how proud you are of your school. You are right to be, because it is an outstanding school!

We found that you really enjoy school, behave well and make excellent progress in your personal development. You know all about how to stay safe and to live healthy lives. Your executive headteacher and associate headteacher are excellent at running the school and they have exceptional support from all the other staff and the governing body. They understand how they could make it even better. Your teachers do a good job too! They make sure that your topics are exciting and interesting and that they help to celebrate the many different cultures and religions in your school exceptionally well. We can understand why you gained your International School award.

Even in an outstanding school such as yours, there are always some things to do to make it better. We have asked your executive headteacher to make sure all your lessons are as good as the best. To do this, we have asked teachers to always make good use of assessment information to make sure that you are all challenged. As well as this, to help you to improve your speaking and listening skills by giving you more chances to talk in lessons. We have also asked the school to improve your attendance. This is where you can really help, by making sure that you attend school each and every day unless you are ill.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your education as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler
Lead inspector

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