

Sydenham Primary School

Calder Walk, Sydenham, Leamington Spa, CV31 1SA

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school benefits from outstanding leadership at all levels. Senior leaders and governors have made excellent use of federation links and training to improve teaching and standards across the school.
- Staff are ambitious, reflective and self-critical. They strive continuously to improve their practice. Teamwork and morale are very strong.
- The school’s curriculum provides pupils with many exciting opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and decision-making skills. Occasionally, pupils choose tasks that do not help them make fast progress.
- Pupils get off to an excellent start in Reception and the early years provision is outstanding.
- All groups of pupils make rapid progress, especially in Key Stage 2. Standards are a little above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well in other subjects, such as art.
- Staff use their expert knowledge of what pupils can already do to plan work which stretches pupils of all abilities. Pupils who need extra help to ensure they achieve well receive skilled support.
- Staff have high expectations of all pupils. They explain new ideas clearly and question pupils expertly to develop their speaking skills and to check on their learning.
- Across Key Stage 1 pupils make faster progress in writing and mathematics than in reading.
- Staff develop pupils’ personal qualities and teamwork skills to the full. This enables pupils to support each other very successfully in all areas of school life.
- The school makes exemplary use of the ‘pupil voice’ to foster pupils’ sense of personal responsibility and commitment to their learning.
- Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent.
- The school promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. It ensures that pupils develop a keen awareness of diversity and life in modern Britain.
- Robust safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils are well cared for and know how to stay safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching during visits to classrooms to check on pupils' learning. On three visits, they were accompanied by the executive headteacher or the associate headteacher.
- Inspectors heard some pupils in Year 2 reading and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with school staff, a group of pupils, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 questionnaires completed by staff and the 33 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector spoke to some parents informally during the inspection.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence including: monitoring records; consultants' reports; the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janis Warren	Additional Inspector
Daniel Kilborn	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll has increased by 40% in the last four years. There are two classes in each year group from Reception up to Year 2. There is one class in each year group in Key Stage 2.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught full time in two Reception classes.
- The Sydenham Children's Centre and the Purple Playhouse, a pre-school nursery, share the same site. Both are managed separately from the school and were not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The 'Early Birds' breakfast club and the 'Butterflies' after-school club are managed by the governing body. Both clubs were included in this inspection.
- The specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs (the specific learning difficulties unit), which was operating at the time of the previous inspection, is now closed.
- About one half of pupils are White British. About one quarter of pupils are of Indian heritage. The remaining pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Some pupils in the younger age-groups are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, is slightly below average at one in five.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average at one in four.
- The school formed a 'hard' federation with Lighthorne Heath Primary School in September 2010. Lighthorne Heath was separately inspected in September 2012. The two schools share a governing body and members of the senior leadership team work across the two schools.
- The executive headteacher is a National Leader of Education (NLE). In this capacity she works for the local authority as an associate learning improvement officer, giving support to schools that were judged 'Requiring improvement' or 'Satisfactory' at their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The school is a designated National College Development School, in recognition of its work in training staff to undertake leadership positions.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' standards further by ensuring that
 - actions to improve pupils' reading skills in Key Stage 1 are fully effective
 - all teachers check rigorously that the tasks which pupils select to do unaided always enable them to make fast progress in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher, associate headteacher and other senior leaders, ably supported by governors, provide exceptionally skilful leadership. They ensure that all staff share, and are fully accountable for, the school's high aspirations for pupils' academic success and personal development. They strive continually to unearth new ways to enhance the curriculum and to raise standards. Leaders set pupils challenging targets and ensure that these are met or exceeded.
- The federation is now well established. Partnership work has been highly effective in supporting procedures for appraising staff's performance and in improving the quality of teaching and assessment. It has opened up new, fruitful training opportunities for staff. Staff are highly qualified and reflective and demonstrate their ambitious approach through the varied research programmes they undertake. The written replies of staff to the questionnaire confirm the value they place on training and their determination to develop their expertise continuously. Morale is high.
- The school's work is checked thoroughly. Leaders at all levels, including middle leaders with allocated responsibilities for subjects and other parts of the school's work, for example the Early Years Foundation Stage, systematically review the impact of the actions they take. They implement new plans in a timely way to tackle any areas of relative weakness in pupils' skills. Stable, highly experienced leadership, together with excellent teamwork, ensure that all colleagues implement agreed procedures consistently. Senior leaders, together with colleagues from their partner school, are carefully considering their options for implementing the school's preferred approach to assessment following the withdrawal of National Curriculum levels.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Staff and governors' insistence that 'every child matters' is deeply ingrained in all aspects of the school's work. Pupils' experiences are supplemented by topics or themes such as 'Black History', close links with the local church, visitors and trips including residential stays, and visits to venues representing other faiths. Pupils understand democratic processes very well. They participate very actively on a daily basis in school decision-making and, more formally, through their involvement in the school- and eco-councils. They are fully aware of their responsibilities to staff and fellow-pupils.
- The school's highly successful commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in its imaginative and engaging curriculum. This enables pupils to develop their competency in literacy and numeracy and subjects, such as science, exceptionally well. It promotes high aspirations, enjoyment, and fascination in learning and sensible risk-taking. It enables pupils to thrive in an exceptionally supportive community. It also offers pupils numerous opportunities to nurture other talents, for example, ballet, or to learn new skills such as kayaking and cooking.
- The highly effective curriculum results in outstanding progress for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, and this is sustained by the way the school allocates its resources including the pupil premium to ensure that all pupils do the best they can.
- National primary sports funding has been spent appropriately, for example, to increase participation in competitive sports. It has also enabled the school to enlarge the number of activities which pupils would not normally have easy access to, such as rock climbing. It has improved the fitness levels of targeted pupils as measured from their baseline assessments.
- The school's highly-developed links with its partner school and other schools in the locality has provided it with useful ways to develop and to review the quality of its work. The local authority, recognising that the school is eminently capable of directing its own improvement, confines its work with the school to a periodic review of pupils' standards.

■ The governance of the school:

- Stability in leadership of the governing body has been an important factor in driving improvement. Key members have served, and continue to serve, at different levels of seniority on the governing body. This has enabled governors to develop and share with new members a great deal of expertise, knowledge of the school and understanding of its priorities.
- Governors are ambitious for the school's success and support senior leaders very effectively in promoting the school's values and improvement. They attend public performances, accompany pupils on residential trips, take part in enrichment activities and update their training regularly.
- In their standards committee, governors discuss how well pupils are doing compared to pupils nationally. They know about the actions leaders have taken to raise standards, including for disadvantaged pupils, and their impact on pupils' achievement.
- A particular strength of governance is the governors' first-hand knowledge of the quality of teaching. They take part in lesson observations together with senior leaders and are present during feedback to individual staff. They use this information to ensure that pay awards are only approved when staff, including the headteachers, meet their demanding targets.
- Governors consider safeguarding and child protection matters carefully. They ensure that current government requirements for safeguarding are fully met and that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Excellent teaching and high expectations for pupils' behaviour promote an exceptional thirst for, and enjoyment of, learning. Pupils, from Reception to Year 6, are keenly aware of the qualities necessary to succeed in school and in later life. The school promotes this actively through its imaginative use of 'learning detectives' (pupils who are trained to recognise positive learning behaviours and who use this information to judge how effectively their classmates are learning during the lesson observations they undertake jointly with staff).
- In lessons, pupils are very attentive, eagerly answer questions and take a full part in discussions. They work with each other in a very supportive way. They take pride in presenting their work neatly and try hard to complete tasks as best they can. They willingly take responsibility for their learning, choosing from the 'chilli pepper' range of difficulty which level of task they want to attempt when they work unaided. In most cases they make the right choices.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly, well-mannered way. They open doors for each other and are polite and welcoming to visitors. They demonstrate the respect and warmth they feel towards staff through the drawings which they dedicate to them. They converse animatedly with each other in the dinner hall. Their behaviour in assemblies, led by staff or their classmates, is outstanding. This was shown during the inspection by pupils' sense of respect for the 'Holocaust' theme and their rapt attention to an excellent presentation by Year 5 pupils dealing with scientific topics.
- Pupils are reflective about beliefs and values and demonstrate a strong sense of teamwork in everything they do. They respect the rules and have a keen sense of what is right and wrong. Minor incidents of misbehaviour are rare. These are carefully recorded and regularly reviewed by staff to enable them to spot patterns in behaviour and to intervene in a timely way. There have been very few exclusions in the last two and a half years.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally well supported, both academically and pastorally, to ensure their well-being in school. This is shown in the small, thoughtful actions which staff take to care for and to minimise risk for their pupils. For example, pupils, who for reasons of diet, allergy or religious observance are unable to eat certain types of food, are identified clearly on their colourful table mats for staff on duty at lunchtimes.
- Pupils and visitors are fully aware of how conscientiously staff treat safeguarding. Posters, files, guidance and warnings are highly visible on corridor walls and pupils report that they are well informed by staff

about a range of safeguarding aspects and procedures for reporting any concerns.

- Case studies show that staff meet very regularly with parents and outside agencies and conduct detailed assessments on potentially vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils in the nurture groups receive excellent support. Staff work closely with class teachers to determine pupils' needs. They devise clear targets and strategies to build positive attitudes and this helps to ensure that these pupils do not fall behind in their learning.
- Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school. They understand what constitutes unsafe situations and are highly aware of strategies for keeping themselves and others safe. They are especially knowledgeable about e-safety.
- Pupils are fully aware of different forms of bullying and actively try to prevent it occurring. Incidents of bullying are very rare and are dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- The well-organised breakfast club provides pupils with a good range of educational activities, which pupils engage with quickly and enjoy after eating their healthy breakfasts. Pupils and their parents appreciate the wide range of high-quality activities offered to pupils in the after-school club.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Much teaching, over time, is outstanding and never less than good. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour, progress and work-rate in lessons. They promote very positive attitudes and exceptionally warm relationships. Staff manage pupils' sensitively, encourage a strong spirit of team-work and motivate individual pupils. They cultivate pupils' self-confidence and instil in them a strong desire to do their best.
- Teachers know individual pupils extremely well and understand how each learns best. They adjust their teaching to take account of feedback from the 'learning detectives'. In lessons they make expert use of their knowledge of what pupils already know and can do. This enables them to plan high-quality learning activities at just the right level to challenge each pupil.
- Staff explain new ideas clearly and check pupils' progress carefully in lessons. They review pupils' learning regularly through precise questioning. They make expert use of computer technology, verbal feedback and thorough marking to monitor and to extend pupils' learning, including for the most able.
- Well-planned teaching for pupils at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language enables them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills securely in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching assistants clarify work and help disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs overcome difficulties through skilful support, especially in small-group work outside classrooms.
- Staff make full use of a range of activities in lessons to develop pupils' speaking skills and to clarify their thinking. The wider curriculum provides numerous opportunities for pupils to state their views orally on their quality of their learning and helps them to build their self-confidence in public speaking, for example, in class-based assemblies.
- Writing skills are expertly taught. Teachers' relentless focus on developing pupils' writing, following a dip in attainment in Year 6 in 2013, has proved to be very successful. They have improved pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills, which pupils are now using to good effect, for example, in their persuasive writing accounts and biographies.
- Mathematical skills are taught very well. Younger pupils acquire a secure grounding in number bonds and place value. This understanding prepares them well for problem-solving exercises, for example, involving perimeters, in Upper Key Stage 2.

- Reading skills are taught exceptionally well in Key Stage 2. Key reading terminology is effectively taught in Key Stage 1. However, new strategies to raise standards in reading in Key Stage 1 are not yet fully established in the school's work.
- In a few instances, more commonly in Key Stage 1, teachers do not check rigorously that pupils select the most suitable 'chilli pepper tasks' to practise or to extend their learning.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 has risen considerably in the last two years. In 2013 and 2014, standards in Year 2 in writing were above average.
- Standards in Year 6 in 2014 were slightly above average overall and the highest for five years. A well – above average proportion of pupils achieved the nationally expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. More than two-thirds of boys and girls achieved the higher Level 5 in reading and in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test. All groups of pupils made rapid progress in Key Stage 2, including those learning English as an additional language. Given the below-average starting points for these pupils in Year 3, this represents outstanding achievement.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were working, on average, two terms behind their classmates in reading, three terms behind in writing and nearly four terms behind in mathematics. Compared to other pupils nationally they were a half term behind in reading, two terms behind in writing and three terms behind in mathematics. Across, the school these pupils make similar progress to their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make fast progress because they receive skilled support. Staff identify any weaknesses in their work very precisely and help them to remedy them quickly. They check work programmes regularly and, if necessary, amend them promptly, to ensure that these pupils progress as well as other groups.
- The most-able pupils achieve very well. Their progress is more rapid in Key Stage 2 where well-focused teaching, together with their growing maturity, enables them to choose the 'chilli pepper' task best suited to extend their learning. The most-able pupils in Year 4, in particular, respond well to being challenged and are making accelerated progress in reading and mathematics.
- Thorough checks on pupils' learning, together with outstanding teaching and an exciting curriculum, underpin pupils' excellent progress. Staff pinpoint short-falls in pupils' skills and tackle them immediately through intensive one-to-one or small-group teaching. These actions are very successful in Key Stage 1 in closing gaps in pupils' writing skills.
- In Key Stage 2, exceptional progress continues across a wide range of subjects. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to practise their literacy skills in other subjects, as shown in their home-learning tasks. Year 6 pupils are currently working at similar levels to their counterparts last year. As pupils move up the year groups they demonstrate an increasing ability to reflect on their learning and to push themselves to the limit to succeed. By Year 6, pupils are well prepared for the challenges of secondary education.
- The carefully planned curriculum ensures that no-one falls behind. It secures pupils' full commitment to their learning and enables them to achieve well in other subjects such as art. Gifted pupils' art-work has been selected for display at the National Gallery.
- Results in the Year 1 screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make) in 2014 were broadly in line with the national average. Across Key Stage 1 pupils make faster progress in writing and mathematics than in reading. This gap, is, however, now starting to close.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Children’s skills and knowledge are often well below those typical for their age on entry to Reception. An increasing proportion of children who speak English as an additional language have a very limited command of English on arrival in the school.
- All groups of children make rapid progress. This means that children with English as an additional language catch up with their classmates in most areas of learning. Small gaps remain in reading and writing which are tackled quickly in Year 1. The percentage of children who reached a good level of development moved much closer to the national average in 2014. This ensures that nearly all pupils are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Staff’s consistent focus on developing pupils’ speaking skills ensures their swift progress. Staff question children regularly, posing ‘problems’ which encourage children to think critically and to try out different solutions. Interventions are timely, follow children’s interests and make expert use of the outdoor area to extend children’s experiences and skills. This was observed, for example, when a painting task turned into a kite-making activity, followed by kite-flying. This very effectively probed children’s ability to work out for themselves the best ways of using the wind to help them fly their kites successfully.
- Staff plan a wide range of well-resourced activities, which foster children’s enthusiasm for learning and ensure that they sustain their concentration and efforts during tasks and at play. During teacher-led lessons, for example in phonics, staff’s positive praise ensures children are unafraid to take risks and ‘have a go’ at using individual words in short sentences.
- Children have very positive attitudes to learning. They are curious learners, relate well to each other and to adults and work hard to improve their skills. They behave exceptionally well and can explain clearly how to stay safe on the internet.
- Reception staff seek to continuously develop their practice and have made excellent use of an expert consultant’s advice and training to make major improvements to provision in the last two years. Children’s achievements are analysed closely and used very effectively to direct teaching.

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	130868
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	453195

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Lyne
Headteacher	Juliette Westwood (Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2011
Telephone number	01926 339138
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