

Inspection of Sydenham Primary School

Calder Walk, Sydenham, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV31 1SA

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2015. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their school and arrive happily each morning into a caring and welcoming environment. Pupils have warm, trusting relationships with adults in school. They know that staff will sort out any worries. This makes pupils feel safe at school.

Pupils are well prepared for their next stages of learning. Right from the early years children are curious and keen learners. They meet the school's high expectations of their achievement. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They listen to their teachers and their classmates and are well mannered. Playtimes are friendly and pupils look after each other. They learn about rights and responsibilities and understand the importance of treating everyone fairly.

The school provides an impressive range of experiences to nurture and develop pupils' talents and broaden their experience of the world. These include clubs such as street dance, cookery and football. Pupils go on many trips, including residentials, where they develop independence and confidence. They benefit from cultural enrichment opportunities, including museum and theatre visits. This inspires pupils to be ambitious with their own work. The school works with national organisations so pupils can experience learning from professional actors and musicians. These opportunities enrich their development and help foster their love of learning.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Children in early years get off to an exceptionally strong start. They quickly settle into established routines. Staff provide activities that capture their interest. Children share, take turns and include each other in activities such as building ramps outside or role play. Skilled staff make the most of every opportunity to talk to children about their learning. This encourages pupils to learn and use important and ambitious vocabulary. For example, children are guided to use the word 'nectar' when talking to their partner about a video of a moth they have watched.

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. It sets out clearly what pupils will learn. This means that teachers know precisely what to teach and when. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They present information in clear and concise ways. For example, in mathematics teachers use practical tasks in the classroom to demonstrate concentric circles, before taking pupils outside to apply this learning in a practical way. Teachers check what pupils know. They use this information to deepen pupils' understanding and ensure pupils with gaps in their knowledge catch up. However, at times some staff do not have high enough expectations for handwriting, and repeated errors with letter formation are not picked up and corrected. This hinders the development of fluent writing for some pupils.

The school swiftly identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have an accurate understanding of these needs. They make effective adaptations to the curriculum, so these pupils learn important knowledge and skills. Many parents and carers are highly positive about the support for pupils with SEND.

They appreciate the work that the school does to provide additional resources and staffing. However, the school does not have a clear strategic overview of which interventions are the most effective. This means that the school does not always know which approaches are working as well as others.

Well-trained staff teach the letters and sounds that children need so that they can begin to learn to read. The books that pupils read match the sounds that they know. The school provides effective support for any pupils who fall behind. Staff encourage a love of reading in pupils. They enjoy visiting the well-stocked library. In early years, parents are invited into school each week to read with their child.

There is a culture of high expectations of behaviour in school. Pupils meet these and this is evident in their conduct and their commitment to helping others. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils understand and follow the consistently applied 'golden rules'. Even the youngest children are keen to talk about their learning and they try hard. They work well together and share resources well.

The school has established an exceptional programme to support pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils become more confident and responsible citizens. They learn about discrimination and the importance of respecting differences between people. They understand the effect of physical exercise on their bodies and learn how to look after their own mental health. This enables pupils to speak about their feelings and emotions. Pupils contribute to the school community by taking on a range of responsibilities, including as young interpreters, peer mediators and eco-representatives. The school ensures everyone can participate in the opportunities on offer.

Governors provide effective challenge and support. They check that leaders' actions maintain the high standards and continue to secure improvements. Leaders care about staff well-being and place high importance on managing their workload. Staff are extremely proud and positive to be part of the team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils' work contains errors with letter formation and staff do not consistently address this. As a result, pupils repeat the same mistakes and do not develop fluency or produce legible and well-presented handwriting. The school should make sure that teachers have high expectations of pupils' handwriting and address errors promptly so that pupils can apply the skills and knowledge that are important for fluent, legible written work.

- The school does not ensure that it has a clear strategic overview of which intervention approaches are most effective. This means that leaders are not clear about which interventions are working well. The school should strengthen the impact of additional support by developing a clearer strategic overview of which approaches are most effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	130868
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10343913
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Butler
Executive Headteacher	Juliette Westwood
Website	www.sydenhamprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Leamington Federation with Lighthorne Heath Primary School. The executive headteacher works across both schools.
- The school operates a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives these subjects: reading, mathematics, religious education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met representatives of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance, and documentation relating to attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of staff and took account of views shared through the staff survey.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with groups of pupils both formally and during less structured parts of the day.
- The inspectors took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, the pupils' survey and the staff survey. The inspectors spoke informally with parents on arrival at school.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

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