

Sutton St James Community Primary School

Bells Drove, Sutton St James, Spalding, PE12 0JG

Inspection dates 22–23 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- How well pupils do varies from class to class and not all make the best possible progress.
- Teachers do not always set work that is well matched to pupils' ability. More-able pupils spend too long on the same work as others.
- Pupils do not do as well as they can in mathematics because they do not use their skills enough or know what learning goals they are working towards.
- Marking does not always help pupils to improve, especially in mathematics.
- Not all tasks inspire learning or help pupils to become independent learners.
- There are weaknesses in the way leaders check the school's work and in the systems used to improve teaching.
- Links with other schools are too new to have yet benefited pupils or helped in staff development.

The school has the following strengths

- The leaders' and staff's commitment to improvement is helping to speed up pupils' progress and improve teaching.
- Pupils are happy, behaviour and safety are good and attendance is above average.
- Year 1 pupils do well in learning about letters and sounds. By the end of Year 6, reading is well above average.
- Teaching assistants skilfully help pupils to understand their work and learn better.
- Effective systems identify pupils who are falling behind. They are given extra help and their progress is improving.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Four teachers were seen teaching and the inspector observed one assembly.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, school leaders and staff. The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector talked to pupils in lessons about their work, looked at their books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector took account of nine responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and written responses, and spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector analysed responses from nine questionnaires from school staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at progress and attendance data, improvement plans, monitoring documentation and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. Their needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) varies from year to year, but is generally below the national average.
- The school's last comparable results fell below the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection the school has experienced staff changes.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes.
- There are nine children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are taught in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class.
- A privately-run pre-school, which is not managed by the governing body, shares the school's site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2013 raise the quality of teaching to be good or better by:
 - ensuring a good match of work to the range of ability in the class, especially for more-able pupils, so all do as well as they can
 - building upon existing good practice in marking and feedback, so pupils are clear about how to improve, especially in mathematics
 - choosing tasks and topics that motivate all pupils to learn and help them to become independent learners.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - giving pupils more chance to use their skills in practical investigations and other subjects, and develop a wider range of methods in problem solving
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics in other subjects
 - ensuring pupils understand what targets they are working towards in mathematics as well as they do in English.
- Improve leadership and management further by:
 - establishing a more formal and detailed way to record, review and build upon feedback given to staff after lesson observations
 - ensuring subject leaders and governors have greater opportunity to check the quality of provision and pupils' learning, especially in English and mathematics
 - consolidating partnerships to extend provision for pupils and further promote staff development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because there is too much variation in how well pupils do. While some make good progress, not enough are doing as well as they could, especially the more-able pupils. Progress is too variable across different subjects, for example reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' attainment is broadly average in all age groups. When children start their reception year, their skills are in line with those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 at expected skill levels. However, their personal, social and emotional development is good, and most have developed good early reading skills.
- Standards have improved since their dip in 2011. By the end of Year 6 in July 2012, standards were broadly average in English and mathematics. Pupils' reading skills develop well as they move through the school. Reading standards by the end of Year 2 are average and by the end of Year 6 they are well above average. Pupils read regularly and have extra help from well-trained volunteers to develop competence and enjoyment of reading.
- The biggest recent improvement is in writing because the focus on improving writing in all classes is paying off. Pupils, especially boys, are now more interested in what they are writing about and write widely in English and other subjects.
- Pupils' make slower progress in mathematics. Leaders do not plan sufficiently for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects, to carry out regular practical investigations or to develop a range of ways to work out problems. Pupils are not as clear about the targets they are working towards in mathematics as they are in English.
- Pupils achieve most when they are inspired to learn. For example, during the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils enjoyed learning about the Second World War. They took on the role of evacuees experiencing life in an air raid shelter, leading to some interesting descriptive writing. Pupils join in keenly and show flair during art and music lessons.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress equal to other pupils. They make small steps in their learning because of regular and well-targeted help. The school's success with these pupils is shown by the fact that few on the first level of support move on to the next level.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make progress in line with their peers. Careful checking ensures they do not lag behind. The school spends the additional funding they attract on extra resources and adult help. This builds up pupils' skills, confidence and enjoyment of school so their rate of progress increases.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is rising, it requires further improvement. This is because while it is good in some lessons, it is not consistent enough to ensure all pupils achieve the best they can in all subjects.
- Teachers do not always pitch tasks at the right level so pupils waste time on work that is too easy or too hard. Some teachers provide useful written and verbal feedback but this good

practice is not sufficiently evident in all classes. It is better in English than it is in mathematics. As a result, pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work and understanding, or what learning target they are working towards.

- For reception-age children, teachers create a good balance between activities that are led by adults and those that the children choose for themselves. Teachers build up a picture of how well children are doing and what they should learn next by compiling 'Learning Journeys' which are shared with parents.
- Teachers recognise that interesting topics and exciting lessons inspire learning. However, lessons often do not include enough chance for pupils to show flair and initiative. A consistently creative approach to planning to get the best out of pupils and develop independent learning is at an early stage.
- The best learning happens when teachers relate tasks to real life and link subjects together. For example, an English lesson used the 'Gingerbread Man' story to link pupils' creative and writing activities. They made gingerbread men and wrote instructions for their teacher to follow. Good teaching prompted pupils to write longer sentences and use 'describing' words.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and are fully involved in the school's drive to improve provision and pupils' achievement. They play a major role in pupils' learning and are well trained and skilled at helping pupils of all abilities to make better progress. This is especially so for the less able, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The teaching of reading is an area of strength. Enthusiastic teaching of letters and sounds in the Reception and Year 1 class means pupils do well in acquiring early reading skills. During regular reading sessions, teachers provide varied reading material. Good use is made of home/school reading records, so parents are involved in supporting their children's achievements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they are happy at school and parents agree. Pupils concentrate well in lessons. They say they really like sports activities and lessons when they are involved in practical activities, such as music and art. Attendance is consistently above average and very few are persistently late or absent.
 - Effective pastoral care and good understanding of individual needs means that pupils fit in well in all aspects of school life because they are well supported. This was effectively put by one parent's comment: 'I feel that the teachers and staff at all levels are genuinely interested in the welfare and progress of the children.'
 - Behaviour is good and pupils get on well together. They value their friendships and like taking on responsibilities to help the school and each other. Systems to promote and maintain good behaviour are effective and clearly understood by staff and pupils.
 - Pupils are confident that the school keeps them safe and they show a good understanding of unsafe situations. They know who to speak to if they have concerns and value the help they get from staff in resolving any problems.
 - Pupils know about different forms of bullying and sensibly discuss what bullying means. The school ensures pupils' understanding through events such as Anti-Bullying Week. Regular
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personal, social and health education lessons raise pupils' social awareness and help them to understand issues that affect them and the wider community.

- The very small minority of pupils who find behaving well difficult make marked improvement over time. They integrate fully into school life and show positive attitudes to learning because they receive the help they need in conforming to the school's expectations.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently well so that good behaviour is maintained in and out of the classroom. They have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and what constitutes unacceptable behaviour because their moral development is well promoted by the school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The process of establishing consistently good or better teaching across the school has been slowed by staffing changes. The headteacher carries out regular observations and classroom visits which are linked to the school's priorities, and teaching is beginning to improve as a result.
 - Discussions help staff understand how to improve their practice. However, ways of formally recording and building upon the feedback given to staff are not sufficiently detailed to enable weaknesses to be consistently reviewed and improve fast enough. Consequently, teaching still requires improvement.
 - The headteacher has made headway in strengthening the staff's leadership skills. Nevertheless, the roles of subject leaders in English and mathematics are underdeveloped. The staff have limited opportunities to check teaching and learning in other classes, and so are not fully informed about the quality of provision in their subjects.
 - Links with local schools are being forged. They are intended to extend facilities for pupils that the school alone cannot provide because of its small size. Additionally, they are intended to encourage staff and leaders to share expertise. The links are, as yet, at an early stage of benefiting staff professional development.
 - Effective support by the local authority has led to accurate self-evaluation and clear plans for improvement. Staff and leaders, including governors, are extending their skills as a result of the local authority's guidance and training. This is having a positive effect on raising achievement and improving teaching.
 - Well-established systems for checking progress flag up any underachievement. Pupil progress meetings with staff and governors are routine, leading to extra help for those who need it. This, together with the ways in which additional income is used to close gaps in performance between different groups of pupils, demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
 - Leaders ensure pupils receive a broad range of subjects and experiences. Partnerships provide additional enjoyable sports and creative activities, including music. Trips and clubs enhance and support learning and pupils' personal development. The school is appropriately moving towards a more creative approach to planning topics that are exciting, interesting and inspire pupils to learn.
 - Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage experience a good range of activities that promote their development in all areas of learning. Suitable emphasis is placed on the development of
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communication, language, physical and personal, social and emotional skills. Indoor and outdoor spaces are effectively used to provide a range of interesting tasks which children enjoy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body holds the school to account for its work but lacks sufficiently well-developed ways to systematically check the quality and effectiveness of provision. Members are determined to raise achievement. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and recognise what needs to improve. They have a suitable understanding of the factors determining salary progression and the quality of teaching in the school, and have set up appraisal arrangements to aid professional development. The governing body knows how money is spent. It authorises extra teaching time for those pupils who attract the pupil premium in order to improve their achievement. The impact of this expenditure is checked to ensure that any gaps between these pupils' and others' achievement are closing. Members of the governing body are keen to sharpen their skills in collaboration with other governing bodies, and members further their own professional training with local authority support. They carry out their responsibilities, including the regular review of policies, to ensure the school's systems are robust and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
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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	120420
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	401934

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	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paula Van Dyke
Headteacher	Stephen Cleland
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2010
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