

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 April 2018

Miss Gill Gilbert
Sutton CofE VC Primary School
The Brook
Sutton
Ely
Cambridgeshire
CB6 2PU

Dear Miss Gilbert

Short inspection of Sutton CofE VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and your leadership team and governors understand how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next. Sutton Primary has a warm, welcoming atmosphere where pupils appreciate that they are encouraged to be independent and take on responsibilities.

Following the previous inspection, pupils' progress and attainment in key stage 1 and 2, in the core subjects of writing and mathematics, declined considerably. This is mainly because leaders did not prepare well enough for the revised and more challenging national curriculum and assessment requirements introduced in 2014. Pupils' progress in reading is stronger, as are outcomes in the early years and in phonics.

Most of the areas for improvement highlighted at the previous inspection have not been successfully implemented across the school. At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise achievement and improve teaching by making sure that teachers check up on the progress of all groups in lessons, so that anyone who was having difficulty could be helped quicker. In some classes, pupils are challenged and well supported. However, this is not consistent across the school. Not all teachers adapt their lessons appropriately to meet the needs of pupils. Where teaching and learning are effective, teachers check on pupils' learning

during lessons adapting tasks accordingly to meet their specific needs. When we were in classes, we noted that where teaching was effective, teachers asked pupils appropriate questions to further deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, children in the Foundation stage were skilfully asked questions to extend their understanding. However, we noticed that not all teachers used their questioning skills consistently to probe pupils' understanding and extend their learning.

Pupils are proud of their school. However, they told me that expectations of them aren't as high as they could be. Older pupils say that they relish the challenges set for them. When expectations are high pupils respond well in lessons. Pupils are polite and well-mannered, and independently approached me to talk about how much they enjoy their school.

Most of the parents responding to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and those who spoke to me during the inspection were very positive about the school. However, a small but significant minority of parents remain dissatisfied with aspects of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors are appropriately trained and receive regular updates. Leaders responsible for safeguarding promptly refer any concerns that staff may have. Your records are well organised and detailed. You and your team have a thorough understanding of the signs of abuse. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities should they have a concern.

Pupils say they feel safe and know how the school keeps them safe. Pupils who spoke with me, confidently explained how to keep safe when online. They know they must report any concerns they may have when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. First, I looked at mathematics and considered whether pupils are making good progress in this vital area of learning. I chose to look at mathematics because pupils' progress in the subject has declined over the last three years and was particularly low in 2017, especially for the most able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Your deputy headteacher undertook an analysis of the reasons why attainment and progress in mathematics aren't as high as in reading. You have acted on this by changing the way mathematics is taught across the school.
- Leaders have attended training to support teachers to improve the quality of mathematics in the school. Leaders are monitoring this aspect to ensure that standards improve.
- The new mathematics leader and county adviser have provided training to staff to build on their knowledge and understanding of problem solving and reasoning.

Pupils' books show where the stronger teaching is, pupils have a range of opportunities to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills and to deepen their understanding.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics is below the national figure for the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. Some teachers do not design tasks well enough to meet the needs of pupils. Consequently, pupils' progress slows and they do not make the progress of which they are capable. Where pupils make good progress, teachers provide additional resources and develop pupils' understanding through appropriate questions to extend their learning.
- For my next line of enquiry, I focused on what leaders are doing to promote good attendance. This was because over the last two years attendance has declined and the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent from school has increased.
- You have clear systems for following up pupils who are off on a daily basis including phone calls and visits to their homes.
- Information about pupils who are persistently absent is collated fortnightly. This information is regularly shared with the governors. However, for the large majority of the families of pupils who are persistently absent on this list, there are no systems in place to help pupils' attendance improve and the families are not contacted. As a result, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is rising.
- My final line of enquiry considered the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and how leaders are ensuring that these pupils make strong progress across subjects. This is because published assessment information for the last two years shows that these pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- The local authority undertook a pupil premium review in January 2018. The review determined that the school was not effectively using the additional funding provided by the pupil premium grant. However, they did find and we also saw that there has been a positive impact on the attainment and progress of lower-attaining disadvantaged pupils. We saw little evidence that the fund has had a positive effect on the most able pupils across the school in most subjects.
- When looking in books and displays across the school, we found that over time the pupils are not regularly exposed to the full range of curriculum skills and subjects. As a result, across the full range of curriculum subjects most-able disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they are capable of.
- You have been invited to be involved in a Department for Education project to support and improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You have already appointed a pupil premium champion and governor as a result of the initial meetings you have attended. It is too early to see the impact of this new project on the outcomes of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all recommendations from the local authority pupil premium review are swiftly acted on and governors are to hold leaders more clearly to account for the progress made by the pupils who are disadvantaged
- the quality of teaching of mathematics continues to improve, so that more of those pupils who have fallen behind, including the disadvantaged and most-able pupils, reach the standards of which they ought to be capable
- attendance improves for those who are persistently absent.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Ely, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Cassandra Williams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, and the school's internal evaluation of its performance.
- Documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, governors' minutes and the school improvement plans, were evaluated.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leaders.
- Together, we observed pupils' learning in classes. We looked at samples of pupils' work in the large majority of classes to evaluate the progress pupils are making over time.
- I spoke informally with pupils during lessons regarding their learning. I also met with a group of pupils and observed breaktime.
- I met with the chair of governors and four other governors.
- The views of the 63 parents who responded to Parent View, the 28 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 36 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire were taken into account. I considered 59 parental comments from the free-text service available during the inspection and one letter.