

Sowe Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103671
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	376945
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Weston HMI

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Chappell
Headteacher	Carole Carter
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Newell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes in the school. Twenty-one lessons or part lessons taught by eight teachers were observed. Inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and at break times. They observed the teaching of reading and listened to some pupils reading. Inspectors met with members of staff and the chair and four other members of the governing body. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at some of the school's documentation including that relating to pupils' learning, behaviour, safeguarding and self-evaluation. Inspectors also looked at various policies and the school development plan. They considered the responses to questionnaires from 95 pupils, 15 staff and 35 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Sowe Valley is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and in the early stages of learning English is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils identified as disabled or with special educational needs is above average and includes pupils with moderate learning, behaviour, emotional and physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school meets the current government floor targets. The school operates its own breakfast club which was included as part of this inspection.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Some aspects of its work are good and the school is improving rapidly. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. The school is not yet good because the proportion of teaching is not yet consistently good or better in the majority of classes. Although the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and contains some strengths, aspects of provision require further improvement. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. They say 'There is a warm and friendly atmosphere...and the staff are kind and approachable'.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory although the proportion of good or better teaching is increasing. Support staff provide sensitive guidance and support for those pupils with special educational needs and in the early stages of learning English. As a result, they make satisfactory progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons and around the school are good. Pupils report that they feel safe, all get on well together and that bullying is extremely rare. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now at the national average for primary schools.
- School leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. As a result of regular training and opportunities to share good practice, the quality of teaching is improving. Middle leaders do not yet receive sufficient training and development to help them support senior leaders in their efforts to further drive up standards. The governing body is increasing its understanding of the school by monitoring and evaluating its work. Performance management systems are satisfactory.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching so that by April 2013 75% is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that the pace of teaching and learning and the level of challenge is better matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly the more able
 - ensuring marking consistently indicates to pupils how well they have done and what they need to do next to improve
 - ensuring that teachers provide opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - increasing opportunities for children to take more responsibility for their own learning
 - using assessment information to plan effective learning opportunities
 - developing the partnership with parents and carers so that they have a greater understanding of and involvement in their child's early learning development.

- Strengthen leadership and management by developing the role of the middle leaders so that they play a greater part in monitoring, evaluating and improving the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge below the expectations for their age particularly in communication, language and literacy, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Nonetheless, they get off to a sound start. Children feel secure with those adults who work with them and an appropriate range of activities is planned to meet their needs and interests. Adults provide good support for children's well-being and personal development but do not focus strongly enough on children's academic achievement. Children are not able to extend their independence fully because their learning is often too tightly controlled by adults. As a result, they make satisfactory rather than good progress in their learning and development. Relationships with parents and carers are satisfactory. Opportunities are not always taken to engage or involve them more in their child's learning or inform them frequently enough how well they are progressing, such as by sharing children's 'learning journeys'.

By the time pupils leave, attainment is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6. They attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics in line with the national average by the end of Year 2. Standards in English and mathematics are in line with the national average at the end of Year 6. Fewer pupils than average attained the higher Level 5 in national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2011. Although parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the progress

their children are making, on some occasions in the lessons observed by inspectors, insufficient challenge was provided for more-able pupils. Lower-ability pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because they receive good support from teaching assistants and other adults.

Although pupils enjoy their lessons, they are sometimes seated listening to the teacher for too long before starting their tasks. Practical equipment such as number lines is not always provided to support their learning in mathematics. This prevents pupils from making better than satisfactory progress over time. On occasions, pupils make more rapid progress. For example, they made good progress in a mathematics lesson in Year 6 on fractions and percentages because they were clear about what they were learning and the level of challenge was high. Consequently, pupils were enthused and focused, and enjoyed their learning.

Across the school pupils are beginning to make better progress in reading. This is largely due to the regular programme which provides opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds and apply this knowledge in their work. Paired reading opportunities also help pupils reinforce and extend their reading skills. This also helps promote good social development because the older pupils support the younger pupils. Individual tuition and small support groups help raise pupils' attainment in reading and improve their self-esteem. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have a sound understanding of how to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read out words although their skills of comprehension are less well-developed.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving; however, it is not yet good enough to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. Teachers are increasingly using assessment information to analyse pupils' progress and match work to their abilities. However, as for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is not yet the level of consistency needed to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can because work is not always matched accurately to the needs of pupils. Sometimes work is too challenging, and on other occasions it is not challenging enough.

Teachers use modern technology with confidence to make learning more interesting. Learning objectives are routinely shared with pupils so they are clear about what they are going to learn. Pupils say they learn a lot and enjoy lessons because they 'are fun'. All parents and carers agree. The recent implementation of the themed curriculum is adding greatly to pupils' interest and enjoyment. Although it provides an increasing range of opportunities for pupils to learn about different topics in depth and make learning links between different subjects, in practice not all teachers plan sufficiently to use these opportunities to apply and extend reading, writing and mathematical skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted through the curriculum, in assemblies and through off-site visits and visitors to school. Other recent curriculum initiatives, such as the introduction of programmes to develop pupils' mental mathematics skills and guided reading sessions are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Teachers generally monitor pupils' work during lessons and identify and remedy any misunderstandings. They praise effort and give positive feedback. Pupils' work is regularly marked. The best examples indicate what they need to do next to improve and time is provided for pupils to respond to teachers' comments. However, this practice is not consistent in all classes or subjects. Although some pupils know their targets, this is variable across the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire or met with inspectors agree that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. One parent typically commented, 'The staff are dedicated to the children and are approachable'. Inspection findings agree with parents and carers that over time behaviour is good at Sowe Valley Primary. Pupils enjoy talking to visitors and are keen to express their views about the school. Pupils from all groups and communities within the school are positive about school life. They are adamant that bullying related to special educational need, disability, religion and belief is extremely rare. School records over time indicate that the pupils' view is accurate. Exclusions are also very rare. Behaviour and engagement in lessons are generally good even though at times the pace of learning slows. The school has a clear system of rewards and sanctions, and these are well-known by pupils.

The school has been successful in improving rates of attendance in recent years through the concerted efforts of school leaders, staff and the learning mentor. A close eye is kept on the attendance of different groups of pupils and the school acts quickly to engage families if they have any concerns. However, school leaders know that they need to continue working closely with parents and carers to ensure a punctual start to the school day. The breakfast club provides a safe and welcoming start to the day for the pupils who attend. They socialise well together and treat adults and other pupils with courtesy and respect. Most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agree that they feel safe when they are in school. Pupils, including those in Reception, have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the development of the school and a common determination to move it forward. The school improvement plan accurately identifies areas for improvement such as for reading and mathematics which are developmental and achievable. The school has recently implemented a thematic approach to curriculum planning. This innovation is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, behaviour and enjoyment and promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural well.

Leaders have established effective systems for tracking pupils' progress. As a result, any underperformance is identified quickly and appropriate intervention strategies are put in place. Consequently, all groups of pupils are given an equal chance of success. The school is successfully narrowing the gap between the attainment of pupils with special educational needs and other pupils. Middle managers are starting to take on more responsibility for pupils' progress by monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, they are beginning to contribute more fully to

school improvement, but these initiatives are not yet sufficiently in place to always aid senior leaders in their drive to raise standards.

Governors are supportive and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. In meetings, they are willing to challenge senior leaders and hold them to account for pupils' achievement. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. The necessary vetting procedures are carried out and staff receive the required training in child protection. All parents and carers say that the school ensures that their children are well looked-after. Although pupils' achievement is now beginning to rise, this is a very recent outcome and not yet a consistent strength over time, indicating that leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve are satisfactory rather than good.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



28 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sowe Valley Primary School, Coventry, CV3 2QX

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with those of you we met and visiting your lessons. 'Thank you' also to the pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire. You told us that you were happy at school and that you felt safe. You also said that bullying was extremely rare in your school and that staff deal with any concerns you have promptly. We could see that you get on really well together and your behaviour is good.

We found that Sowe Valley is a satisfactory school. We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do a number of things to improve your school further. We have asked your teachers to give you work that is not too easy or too hard; to give you more opportunities to use your maths and literacy skills in other subjects like history and science; and make sure marking helps you know precisely what you need to do to improve your work. We have also asked that children in Reception have more opportunities to find out things for themselves and that their work and progress is shared with their parents and carers more often. Finally, we want all the school's leaders to play their part in making the school an even better place to learn.

You can all help to improve your school by continuing to work hard, attending school every day and arriving on time. Thank you for being so kind and helpful during our visit. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector

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