

Southway Primary School

South Way, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 5EZ

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has undergone a period of significant turbulence in leadership since the previous inspection. This has contributed to a decline in the school's performance.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies between year groups, classes and subjects. Pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of pupils' written work is not as good as it should be. Too many pupils at key stage 2 do not have a good enough grasp of basic skills to write fluently and confidently. They do not all present their work neatly and legibly.
- Some teachers do not have a good enough understanding of the level at which pupils are working. As a result, the work provided for pupils does not offer a high enough level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Although pupils learn a range of subjects other than English and mathematics, these are not covered to sufficient depth and so pupils do not build their knowledge and skills progressively.
- Some leaders do not have a sound enough grasp of all performance information and so do not have a strategic overview of the strengths and weaknesses of their subject.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They are taught well and they make good progress in preparation for Year 1.
- Pupils across the school behave well. They feel safe in school owing to the high quality of care they receive from adults.
- The provision for sports is of high quality and enables pupils to experience a wide range of physical activities. The broad curriculum provides pupils with some memorable experiences.
- Since her appointment, the principal has worked in close cooperation with the staff, governors and the United Learning Trust to address previous weaknesses. The school is improving quickly.
- Actions taken by the leadership team have already begun to address low standards. The most recent performance information shows that a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach their expected level, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have a good understanding of the levels at which pupils are working and that they provide work that offers sufficient challenge, especially for the most able pupils
 - the school’s feedback policy is used consistently by all teachers so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work
 - teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics, and they check on pupils’ understanding before moving them on to harder work.
- Raise standards in writing for all pupils, especially those in key stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that all pupils develop and use basic writing skills of handwriting, punctuation and spelling when completing their written work, and that their work is always presented to the highest possible standard
 - providing pupils with good models of writing with imaginative vocabulary to show them how to produce high-quality written work
 - increase the opportunities pupils have to write extensively when learning other subjects.
- Develop the curriculum so that pupils learn subjects other than English and mathematics to a deep and meaningful level.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant period of turbulence in leadership and staffing during which the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2 declined steeply.
- Since her appointment in January 2017, the principal has secured the trust and respect of staff and governors, and worked tirelessly to bring about the improvements needed. With support from advisers from the United Learning Trust, she and her leaders took action to improve the quality of teaching and so raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Staff and governors are highly ambitious for success. They have created a bright and attractive learning environment that provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to learn and to reflect upon their learning. There is a strong sense of pride in the school, and staff morale is high.
- School leaders and governors have a broadly accurate view of the school. They have well-defined plans in place showing the actions they are taking to raise standards. While these are showing early signs of success, leaders are not complacent. They know that more needs to be done to accelerate progress for pupils, especially in writing.
- Advisers from the trust visit the school at least once each term to check the progress the school is making. School leaders and teachers act on the advice provided and, as a result, the quality of teaching is improving. School leaders provide clear support and feedback to teachers to help them to improve their work.
- Staff welcome the support provided by the principal. One member of staff who completed the staff survey wrote: 'The principal is keen for all staff to have a work-life balance. I feel she drives improvement very well, while taking into account staff well-being.' The large majority of staff who completed the survey were very positive about the changes introduced by the principal.
- Training and development are key features of leadership. While some training is common to all staff, school leaders plan other activities that are designed to meet the individual developmental needs of staff. Consequently, the standard of teaching is improving. Performance reviews are held to check that improvements are maintained.
- The school maintains extensive records of pupils' learning and progress, and so leaders can identify those groups of pupils who are at risk of falling behind their classmates. However, not all leaders routinely use this information to give them a strategic view of pupils' performance in their area of expertise. Consequently, improvements in some aspects of the school's work have not been so rapid.
- In recent years, there has been a strong focus on teaching English and mathematics at the expense of other subjects. As a result, pupils do not study other subjects, such as history, science or religious education, to any great depth. The work they are given lacks challenge and does not build their skills systematically from year to year. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and mathematical skills when learning other subjects.

- There are strengths in some aspects of the curriculum. For example, pupils carry out various practical activities, such as building and setting fire (in a controlled situation) to 'volcanoes'. They visit the school's woodland area, where they had a visit from an actor depicting Robin Hood as part of their topic on 'Robin's Recruits'. Pupils design and make models linked to their topics and this provides them with memorable experiences that add to their enjoyment of school. These activities help to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The school has made effective use of the primary physical education and sport premium funding and so pupils develop their skills across a wide range of physical activities. The school employs specialists, such as dance teachers, to work alongside school staff to help develop their own teaching skills. This enhances the provision for pupils who enjoy competing at local and county level.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the online survey, and those who spoke to inspectors, agreed or strongly agreed that the leadership and management of the school are good.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognise that the school has been on a journey and that the principal has quickly brought about stability within a difficult situation. They offer a high level of support while understanding that they need to provide effective professional challenge to school leaders. Governors know the school well. They regularly monitor the progress of the school through reports provided by the principal and by visiting the school. Governors receive regular training, including that related to safeguarding, and are well placed to support school improvements. They use reports by external advisers and consultants as well as information provided by school leaders.
- Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively. They hold school leaders to account and know that they are taking appropriate action to improve pupils' outcomes. Their work is well planned and they ensure that all additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent carefully. They know that, in the past, the performance of disadvantaged pupils has been well below that of other pupils in school and have challenged school leaders to diminish this difference. They ensure that all arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures and documentation maintained by the school demonstrate an effective approach. These are underpinned by persistence, knowledge of risks and a commitment to sharing information.
- School leaders and governors have created a culture in which the safety and well-being of pupils are the responsibility of all staff. The designated safeguarding lead officer is fully trained. She ensures that all staff receive regular training and briefings so that they know exactly what to do should they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk from harm. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns to ensure that pupils receive the support they need in a timely way. They have established good working relationships with other professionals and so can draw on the expertise of others as needed. Meticulous records showing the impact of external support are kept.

- Pupils say they feel safe in school, and this is reflected in the comments they made to inspectors, as well as those made through the pupil survey. Pupils have confidence that adults would help them and take their concerns seriously. Through assemblies and the curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep safe from external risks to their health and safety. For example, they have been taught how to take particular care when using modern technology.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Recent improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet been embedded across the school and so have not had sufficient impact in every classroom. Consequently, pupils, especially those who are most able, do not make consistently strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Not all teachers use assessment confidently to plan work that is sufficiently matched to pupils' learning needs. Too often, the tasks set do not challenge pupils to think deeply about their work. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. They do not all apply the school's marking and feedback policy to challenge poor work.
- There are times, particularly in mathematics, where teachers do encourage pupils to take on a harder challenge. However, this is sometimes done prematurely, before the pupil has understood previous learning. As a result, some pupils have not developed a conceptual understanding of the previous step before moving on, and so fail to complete the work correctly.
- Where teaching is stronger, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards learning. They listen to teachers and respond quickly to their instructions. There are good working relationships between teachers and pupils and this contributes to an orderly working environment.
- In most classes, pupils have plenty of opportunities to talk and to share their ideas. This encourages them to work collaboratively and to build their confidence. Most teachers explain clearly to pupils what it is they want them to learn. They ask questions that make pupils think, and this develops their skills and knowledge.
- The teaching of writing is less effective than that of reading and mathematics, especially across key stage 2. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers do not challenge poor presentation. In some year groups, teachers have an overgenerous view of the level at which pupils are working and so they do not provide enough help and guidance about how pupils' writing may be improved. There are few examples of where pupils use their writing skills when learning other subjects. Not all teachers make effective use of inspiring texts with rich vocabulary to help pupils to improve their writing skills.
- Some teachers have good subject knowledge that they use effectively to build pupils' knowledge and understanding. They probe pupils' thinking and challenge them. As a result, pupils make good progress over time. However, some teachers' subject knowledge is less secure and their questioning is less effective. Where this is the case, too few pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Teachers' subject knowledge has improved in mathematics. This is largely due to the

introduction of a mathematics scheme that successfully underpins the teaching of this subject. As a result, more pupils are making progress and reaching the levels expected for their age. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Adults care for pupils. They have created a bright and stimulating learning environment, both inside the school building and in the school grounds. Classrooms have helpful displays that support learning, and the playground has a wealth of equipment and games that encourage pupils to be active during breaktimes.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and they know how to keep themselves safe. They say there is very little bullying but are confident that most adults will listen to them and take their concerns seriously. They are very aware of the need to stay safe when using modern technology.
- Pupils are friendly and helpful and they get on very well together. They listen to each other and show respect towards the views and feelings of others. They are polite and courteous, creating a sense of harmony within the school. Through the Southway Seven Values, pupils learn what it means to be British and to understand values, including respect, tolerance and understanding.
- The school uses the primary sport funding well to provide a wide range of physical activities for pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy the variety of activities that help to keep them fit and healthy. Many have developed skills to a level that allows them to participate in sports at both local and county level.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Although there are instances of inappropriate behaviour in classrooms, these are of low level and do not disrupt learning for other pupils. Most pupils behave well and they are keen to learn.
- School leaders act decisively to tackle instances of poor behaviour. As a result, the number of pupils who are excluded from school has reduced significantly. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their attendance, which is broadly average. Few pupils are persistently absent.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey or who spoke to inspectors agreed or strongly agreed that their children were happy and safe in school, and that they were well looked after.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At the end of Year 6 in 2017, pupils' attainment and progress in reading and mathematics were well below the national averages. Although their attainment in writing was broadly in line with the national average, their progress was below average. Very few pupils reached the higher standard in these subjects.
- Owing to actions taken by school leaders, supported by the trust, there have been improvements in reading and mathematics. Current performance information and work seen in pupils' books suggest that a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard than in previous years. However, work in pupils' books shows that too few are meeting the expected standard in writing and that their progress is slow.
- The presentation of pupils' work in their books is often untidy, and pupils are given little guidance about how they may improve their work. Their handwriting, in particular, is untidy, and many pupils at key stage 2 do not have a secure grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils do not have a wide range of vocabulary to help them express their ideas fluently and confidently, and this slows their progress.
- Pupils have made more rapid progress in reading than in writing and mathematics. Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching reading. Coupled with training from advisers, this has helped to raise standards in the subject. A higher proportion of pupils are on course to reach and exceed the expected standard this year.
- The proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in phonics is broadly average and this gives pupils a good start to learning to read. By Year 6, pupils enjoy reading, and talk confidently about the books they choose. They read fluently and confidently and with evident pleasure.
- A new approach to teaching, combined with useful training, is helping pupils to make up lost ground in mathematics. Pupils have gained confidence in manipulating numbers and carrying out calculations. However, there remain inconsistencies in the progress that pupils, especially those who are most able, make. This is largely because not all teachers check that pupils fully understand mathematical concepts securely before moving them on to harder work.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have made poor progress. However, current leaders have made much better use of funding to provide tailored programmes of work to help these pupils to catch up with their classmates. Although the progress they make lags behind other pupils, the differences in the amount of progress they make are diminishing.
- Although pupils study a wide range of subjects, not all teachers plan lessons that build systematically on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They are warmly welcomed into a bright and attractive learning environment that prepares them very well for Year 1. They behave very well and enjoy learning and playing with each other. Because adults provide high-quality care for them, children feel safe and secure.
- Staff are skilled at providing enticing experiences for children to stimulate their imagination. For example, a recent visit from a chicken expert, together with chickens, inspired some engaging writing. Children wrote simple sentences, spelling words reasonably accurately, and demarcated appropriately with full stops and capital letters.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased year on year and, in 2017, it was in line with the national average. This is because teachers know the children well and provide a rich curriculum that helps them to make rapid gains in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff work well as a team, and one of the strengths of provision is the way in which children move confidently from one area of learning to another. There is a good balance of activities, some of which children choose for themselves, while others are selected and led by adults. Both the indoor and outdoor areas are very well set out with resources and equipment that engage children's interest and curiosity. However, just occasionally, adults do not exploit all learning opportunities by intervening and asking questions to develop children's learning more fully.
- While there is a uniform system in place to record assessments across the early years, there are inconsistencies with that seen in children's learning journeys. These inconsistencies include contradictory assessments and variable frequency in recording observations. Some observations do not indicate an assessment.
- Children's personal development is promoted very effectively. Children have very positive attitudes to learning. They show high levels of perseverance and resilience when carrying out their activities. Children have a clear understanding of right and wrong and they are helped to take turns and to share.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. The leader has a good understanding of where the strengths lie and where further improvements can be made. She knows that assessment records are thorough but would be strengthened further by dating children's work to evaluate their progress more effectively. Staff are vigilant about children's safety. They manage all aspects of the provision to keep children safe.

School details

Unique reference number	138413
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10040698

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	630
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Diane Willson
Principal	Sarah Holland
Telephone number	01243 810 200
Website	www.southwayprimary.co.uk
Email address	head@southwayprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most primary schools, and pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- There is provision in the early years in the Nursery and three Reception classes.
- The principal was appointed in January 2017 following a period of instability within the leadership team.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2017. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils working in 32 lessons or parts of lessons, many of which were visited jointly with school leaders. They spoke to pupils about their work and they looked at work in pupil's books. They listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers new to the profession and governors. A meeting also took place with the primary director of the United Learning Trust.
- Inspectors observed pupils in class and as they moved around the school. They visited the playground at lunchtime. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and they spoke to pupils informally during the course of the inspection. They took into account the 226 responses to the pupil survey.
- Among the documents scrutinised were plans showing how the school is to improve, information about pupils' learning and progress, and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors also considered reports from external advisers who have supported the school and records of the school's own evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Inspectors scrutinised information showing how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 89 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and taking into consideration 30 free-text comments. They considered 59 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Joy Considine, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Timothy Rome	Ofsted Inspector

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