

Inspection of a good school: Sutton Oak C of E Primary School

Goodban Street, Sutton, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 3QD

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

Sutton Oak C of E Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe at this school. They described their school as one big family, because everyone looks after one another. Pupils like that staff take time to talk with them. This makes pupils feel valued and cared for well.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils' achievement. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that every pupil, regardless of their starting points, accesses a broad and balanced curriculum. Across the school, pupils achieve highly. This includes children in the early years, who learn and develop well.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They are well mannered and kind. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They try hard to demonstrate the school's values in everything that they do. Pupils thoughtful conduct makes the school a happy and friendly place to be. Any bullying is dealt with quickly by staff and leaders.

Leaders promote pupils' wider personal development effectively. They offer pupils a range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Pupils are encouraged to join in with activities outside of school, including singing at community events. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities on offer, such as Spanish and art clubs.

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

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. In these subjects the curriculum is well ordered and leaders have clearly set out the knowledge that pupils must be taught. However, in a few remaining subjects, leaders have not finalised their curriculum thinking. This makes it difficult for teachers to know exactly what should be taught and in what order. On occasions, this hinders how well pupils learn new knowledge and information.

Leaders have constructed a well-thought-out curriculum in the early years. For example, in mathematics, children in the Reception Year are taught to count accurately and to match numbers to objects. This helps them to develop an early understanding of place value. Overall, a well-designed and exciting early years curriculum prepares children well for the demands of Year 1.

Teachers carefully check pupils' knowledge and understanding in lessons. Any gaps in learning and any misunderstandings are addressed promptly. Teachers deliver the curriculum consistently well.

Staff collaborate effectively together to discuss how well pupils are learning. This collaboration works particularly well for pupils with SEND. Their needs are identified accurately and they are able to access the same learning as other pupils. Any pupils who find learning more difficult or who have gaps in their knowledge are given extra support to help them to catch up.

Leaders ensure that reading has a high profile from the early years through to Year 6. In the Nursery class, children are encouraged to sing nursery rhymes and to share books with adults. Older pupils enjoy the responsibility of being reading ambassadors and they read regularly to the younger children.

As they progress to the Reception Year, and Year 1, pupils develop a secure understanding of phonics. Staff are suitably trained to teach the phonics programme. New teachers also get the support that they need to teach phonics accurately and with consistency. Teachers check pupils' phonics knowledge regularly. If pupils fall behind, they receive timely help so that they can catch up and keep up with their peers. Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. As a result, there is rarely any low-level disruption and pupils can get on with their learning.

Leaders and staff work closely with families to ensure that pupils attend school more regularly. Over time, attendance has improved. However, a few pupils still do not attend school as regularly as they should. This prevents these pupils from experiencing all that the school has to offer.

Leaders have carefully prioritised pupils' wider personal development. For example, pupils learn about the importance of becoming tolerant and respectful citizens. Added to this, leaders successfully encourage all pupils to have high aspirations for their future careers. Older pupils participate in a project which encourages them to learn about the importance of the world of work and the opportunities that come with aiming high.

Staff are appreciative of the support that they receive from leaders to manage their well-being. Leaders have appropriately revised policies to ensure that staff's workload is not overburdensome.

Governors know the school well. They have a secure overview of the quality of education that pupils receive. Governors provide effective challenge for school leaders and hold them to account for their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are well trained to spot any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being. Staff make timely referrals to the school's safeguarding leaders.

Leaders know pupils' families very well. Leaders work closely with external agencies to make sure that pupils and their families get the timely support that they need. Parents and carers value this support.

Leaders ensure that the school's curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in the wider world. For example, pupils have recently learned about the dangers of playing games online and the risk of cyberbullying.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In one or two subjects, leaders have not finalised their curriculum thinking. This makes it difficult for teachers to know exactly what needs to be taught and in what order. It also prevents some pupils from achieving all that they could. Leaders should finalise their curriculum design in these remaining subjects. This is so teachers know what needs to be taught and what pupils need to know and remember over time.
- A few pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This prevents some pupils from experiencing all that the school has on offer. Leaders should continue to work with parents and other agencies to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	104791
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10256150
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alice Edgerton
Headteacher	Iwan Williams
Website	www.suttonoak.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	31 October and 1 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sutton Oak Church of England is a voluntary-controlled school. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place 18 January 2018.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and other senior leaders. She met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspector met with the leaders responsible for SEND and those responsible for the early years.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke

to some pupils about their learning, listened to pupils' read and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also considered other subjects across the curriculum.
- The inspector examined the single central record and checked the suitability checks made on staff. She met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding and sampled case studies and other relevant documentation.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector spoke with some parents as they dropped their children off at school. She also reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector held meetings with members of staff and looked at the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Kelly Butler, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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