

# Sonning Common Primary School

Grove Road, Sonning Common, RG4 9RJ

**Inspection dates** 12–13 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The achievement of pupils has improved considerably since the previous inspection and pupils now achieve well. By the end of Year 6 attainment is above average and pupils have made good progress in all areas.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well and are prepared well for Year 1.
- Teaching over time is good especially in the Reception classes and Years 3 to 6 where it is often outstanding. This is why achievement in these years has improved so strongly.
- In many classes the close partnership between teachers and teaching assistants makes a very valuable contribution to the learning taking place.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have a clear understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school and use the information well to drive improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and the school is a calm learning environment. Behaviour around the school is good and most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They say that they feel safe and know how to stay safe.
- Very effective use has been made of the grant to improve primary school sport.
- The school provides good support for the pupils with high levels of special educational need or disability to keep them included in lessons.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Achievement in Years 1 and 2 has not improved as rapidly as in other parts of the school and too few pupils attain the higher levels in national assessments.
- The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 over time has not been as consistently good as it has been in Years 3 to 6.
- In Years 1 and 2 the targets set for pupils are not as challenging as in the rest of the school and this slows the pace of learning.
- The systems for analysing and presenting data do not easily give a clear picture of how different groups of pupils are achieving compared to all schools nationally.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 29 lessons or parts of lessons and observed 15 teachers. Some of the visits were carried out together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, teachers and support staff and a discussion was held with the school's improvement leader from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at the school's own self-evaluation and the school improvement plan and evaluated samples of pupils' work alongside senior staff.
- Other documents looked at included: curriculum planning; documents relating to attendance, safeguarding and child protection; records of pupils' attainment and progress; records of behaviour; records relating to the monitoring of teaching; and minutes of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 97 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and some parents and carers were spoken to at the start of the school day. Questionnaires received from 28 staff were analysed.

## Inspection team

Stephen Lake, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Philp Scull	Additional Inspector
Susan Ivermee	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- This school is larger than most other primary schools. It serves a wide area with some parents and carers choosing to bring their children from nearby towns.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is above average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is also above average. These proportions have increased in the last year or so. The most significant areas of need include moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A small but significant number of pupils have difficulties on the autism spectrum and a few are disabled.
- A well below average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is funding to support children in local authority care, children of service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Many members of the senior leadership team are new in post since September and three teachers are new to the school since September.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 1 and 2, in order to enable achievement to rise to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that assessment information is used effectively to plan work that matches the needs of all pupils, especially those who are more able
  - raising teachers' expectations of the amount of work that pupils can complete in a given time in order that they remain engaged and working quietly and consistently in line with the best examples seen in the school
  - setting more challenging targets for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and making sure that pupils know what they have to do to meet these targets.
- Review the systems for analysing data at a strategic level to ensure that leaders and managers have easy access to information on how well groups of pupils are achieving compared to those in other schools nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school in the Reception classes with skills typically below the levels usually found at that age. They make good progress to start Year 1 well prepared for learning and with skills broadly in line with those found nationally. This is an improving picture and the children currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage are on track to achieve above average levels of skills by the end of the year.
- The attainment of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 has risen considerably faster than nationally since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress to achieve standards that are above average. Attainment in writing shows a great improvement through the introduction of new approaches, such as pupils writing at length after preparing what they are going to say and working on their targets to improve vocabulary.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2, although maintaining the levels of achievement slightly above the national average, have not improved their achievement as much as in Years 3 to 6 and attainment is not rising significantly because more-able pupils are not being challenged enough to attain the higher levels in national assessments. However, recent school assessments show that the current pupils in Year 2 are on track to attain higher standards in all areas by the end of the year.
- In the most recent check on phonics skills (the linking of letters and sounds) more pupils than average attained the expected standard. Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 remains broadly average because too few pupils are attaining the higher levels. By the end of Year 6 attainment in reading is above average. Pupils are confident and fluent readers who say that they enjoy reading.
- The small group of pupils supported by the pupil premium attained levels almost two years lower in reading, writing and mathematics than the other pupils in the school in the most recent national assessments at age 11. This was because this group contained mainly pupils with considerable special educational needs. Checks on other year groups show that most pupils in this group are attaining levels close to those attained by other pupils and are making good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least the same progress as other pupils due to the support they receive and some make accelerated progress.
- High quality artwork, by all year groups, was observed in the school.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers work hard to stimulate and motivate pupils, making good use of information and communication technology to support this. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and normally set challenging tasks to enable this.
- Many examples of outstanding teaching were observed in Years 3 to 6 especially in Year 6 where teaching and learning are of consistently high quality. In a mathematics lesson pupils in Year 3 made outstanding progress as they developed their understanding of the different written methods of subtraction. In a lesson in Year 6 pupils made excellent progress developing their understanding of the use of colons and semi-colons. They then used this skill well in the following writing sessions. However this high quality of teaching is not consistent throughout the school, especially in Years 1 and 2.
- Recent appointments are strengthening the teaching team in Years 1 and 2. Nevertheless, in these years, teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not use information well enough on what pupils already know well and can do to set tasks that challenge all pupils, especially those who are more able. This slows the pace of

learning in some lessons and sometimes results in these pupils being off task causing a little disruption to learning.

- Teachers mark books frequently and most set clear next steps for learning so that pupils know what to do next. In the majority of lessons challenging targets are set for all pupils and they know when they have achieved their targets. This is less frequent in Years 1 and 2.
- The curriculum is taught well, especially the aspects that support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is currently employing 'Bomb art' where features such as giant spiders' webs appear in the playground overnight. During the inspection a large pair of 'Santa's elf's shoes' captured pupils' imagination and curiosity when they appeared on the roof of one of the gazebos in the playground.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good support that enables them to take a full part in lessons alongside other pupils.
- In many classes the high quality partnership between teachers and teaching assistants enables all pupils to receive high-quality support that enhances their learning.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that teaching is good.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils behave very well most of the time. Behaviour around the school is consistently good. Pupils and parents and carers commented upon the positive impact of changes to the behaviour management policy. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions and respond well to instructions from teachers. They are polite and courteous and show respect to one another especially to those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- In most classes pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, but in Years 1 and 2, when teaching does not fully challenge them, a small number of pupils do not concentrate well. This slows learning in those lessons where it occurs.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying including discrimination and prejudice-based bullying. They demonstrate a strong understanding of how to avoid cyber bullying and unsafe sites on the internet and understand how to keep themselves safe in other situations. All know what might be thought of as unacceptable or discriminatory language and say that only a tiny amount of this or other bullying occurs. When it does occur they trust teachers to deal with it.
- Pupils are aware of the needs of others and show concern as can be seen in their regular fund-raising for charities, for example, dressing up as favourite characters in stories to raise money for the 'Book Bus' project in India.
- A very large majority of those parents and carers who responded to Parent View, staff, governors and pupils agree that behaviour is good.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- All staff share with the headteacher and governors a clear vision for the school and an ambition to continue the improvement made since the previous inspection.
- The local authority provided good quality support for a period after the previous inspection which helped secure the improvements that have taken place. This has now reduced to a light touch as the school clearly has the capacity for further improvement and the senior leaders and managers are now able to drive forward improvement themselves.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of school performance through regular checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement. This information is used effectively to make sure teachers receive good quality training.
- Most of the new leaders are settling into their role well and supporting improvement although it is too early to see the full impact of their work.

- Good procedures are in place for checking on the performance of individual pupils and the data are used effectively to prevent discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity. Nevertheless the systems in place for analysing the data to give a strategic overview of the progress made by groups and cohorts are not good enough to provide leaders and managers with this information in an easily understandable format. This limits quick and easy comparison of performance compared with all schools nationally.
- The school has made very effective use of the grant to improve primary school sport. Very large numbers of pupils take part in competitive and non-competitive sport. For example over 80 pupils attend the cross-country club and all pupils can swim by the time they leave the school. Training for teachers is in place to sustain the impact of this grant.
- Procedures for child protection meet requirements. Training in safeguarding and child protection is up to date and the school takes all reasonable steps to keep pupils safe.
- The broad curriculum places a strong focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which could be seen, for example, during the 'Grandparent week' when parents, carers and grandparents worked alongside pupils to produce joint pictures and poems, or in the good quality African art.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school. They contribute information to school self-evaluation through their regular visits and challenge the school to improve further. Governors have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching and of how teachers are rewarded for good performance or provided with professional development to aid improvement. Good use is made of an external school improvement leader to enable governors to ensure that challenging performance targets linked to raising achievement are set for the headteacher. The budget is monitored well and governors check on the impact of specific funding such as the primary school sports grant or the pupil premium funding. On their regular visits to the school governors also check on the quality of school meals to promote healthy eating by pupils.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123038
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	426492

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	396
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve McGrath
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chris Hirst
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–13 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 972 2105
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