

Sutherland Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124016
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314779
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	496
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Niblett
Headteacher	Garry Boote
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Beaconsfield Drive Blurton Stoke-on-Trent ST3 3DY
Telephone number	01782 233977
Fax number	01782 233980

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Inspection number	314779

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues were investigated: pupils' academic achievement; teaching and learning; the quality of care, guidance and support; and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from scrutiny of assessment data; checking the school's records and documents; analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire; observation of the school at work; and discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Sutherland Primary School is a larger than average school with pupils from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above that found nationally. Overall, children's attainment when they begin school is well below what is expected for their age. A new headteacher has been in post since September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sutherland Primary School is a good school with outstanding features, and one to which parents are proud to send their children. 'Great school, children work hard but still have fun. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and there is a good atmosphere', wrote one parent, reflecting the views of many. Pupils respond well to good teaching. As a result, pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. They reach well above average standards in mathematics and science and average standards in English by the time they leave in Year 6.

Lessons have an obvious focus, which teachers share with pupils. This means that pupils are very clear about what they have to do and what they are aiming to achieve. Short and snappy activities fully engage pupils and ensure that lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers make good use of the ends of lessons to review and to plan the next small steps in pupils' learning. Open-ended tasks and investigations are used effectively to develop pupils' broader mathematical and scientific skills of problem solving, reasoning and using information in new situations.

The teaching of English, particularly writing, has not been as effective as that of mathematics and science. The school has analysed the reasons for this and has implemented a new systematic approach to the teaching of writing, including improving basic skills and increasing the range of writing styles that pupils encounter. These activities have not yet had time to have a significant impact on standards.

The school is a harmonious and inclusive community with a very strong commitment to aiding pupils' all-round development. Relationships are exemplary. Pupils receive high quality care, guidance and support and share a mutual respect for each other. Child protection and health and safety procedures are secure. Very effective support and guidance from the home-school workers and the learning mentor enable parents to be involved well in their children's education. There is very good support for vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties. These pupils are fully included in school activities, and make good progress. Pupils who are more able are given every opportunity to succeed, as indicated by the significant proportion of pupils who attain standards above the expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Underpinning the school's good achievement is the highly effective programme to support pupils' personal development, including their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school works hard to prepare pupils to take their place in a culturally diverse society. It ensures that pupils know about their local community and have a sense of the wider world. This is an important feature in a school with a low proportion of pupils from different backgrounds.

Pupils enjoy school, as is shown by their improving levels of attendance and their excellent attitudes to learning. They report that they feel safe and free from bullying because they know to whom to turn if a problem should occur. Pupils are pleased to use their initiative, for instance to plan fundraising activities to support many charities. The school council makes a valuable contribution to school life, and pupils feel they have a strong voice in school affairs. Even the youngest pupils offer and discuss opinions confidently and work well independently. Pupils say that being a member of the school council develops their leadership skills and that they are proud to be role models for the younger pupils, adding that it made them 'more responsible and mature'.

'Healthy living' is the watchword in school. Pupils have a very good understanding of what makes a balanced diet and make sensible food choices at lunchtime. Many regularly attend fitness and indoor rowing sessions. A number of pupils report that they feel fitter and that their self-esteem has risen as a result of these sessions.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal and academic development well. Pupils greatly appreciate the extra-curricular activities, which include an excellent range of sports. Considerable attention is paid to developing pupils' knowledge and skills for their future education and the world of work, for example through the Primary Enterprise scheme. Pupils were successful in their bid for £13,000 to set up their own business within school. Information and communication technology (ICT) effectively enhances pupils learning. The school has suitable plans to improve the direct teaching of ICT skills with the development of an ICT suite. Opportunities to develop music and physical education (PE) skills are good. The school is beginning to develop creative partnerships, working with both an artist and a poet in residence and producing some vibrant Islamic artwork. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to experience links between subjects that add interest and relevance to activities.

Leadership and management are good. Staff work well as a team and share a strong commitment to school improvement. The staff are rightly proud of their school and there is no doubting their determination to improve even further. Capacity to improve is good. Thorough self-evaluation allows the school to have an accurate picture of what needs improving. Although the school improvement plan covers areas for development well, new initiatives are not always sharply enough evaluated in terms of their influence on pupils' standards and progress. The new headteacher has introduced new systems for monitoring and evaluation to enable the senior leaders to have a more in-depth analysis of school effectiveness and identify further priorities for improvement. Other leaders are becoming more involved in this process and have made a promising start in monitoring and evaluating their subjects. There is an appropriately high focus on maintaining high standards and improving attainment in English. The school sets itself challenging targets and is usually successful in meeting them because teachers know their pupils very well and use the tracking system effectively to identify any pupil at risk of underachieving. Interrogation of this system indicates that progress in Year 3 has been less strong than in other year groups and is a key area in the school's improvement plan.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the Nursery, their skills and abilities are well below expected starting points in most areas of learning and they have much ground to make up. They build up their skills and knowledge quickly once they have settled, including those in the basics of early reading, writing and mathematics. Particularly good gains are made in personal, social and emotional development. The staff know the children and their families well and use this knowledge to create an atmosphere in which children feel secure. In the Nursery, there is a good balance between times when children can choose what they do and when they sit together with an adult to learn as a group. The outside area is well thought out and supports children's physical development well. Children continue to make good progress through Reception, reaching the expected levels for their ages in most of the areas of learning. However, the accommodation for the Reception class restricts children's ability to engage in creative and imaginative play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the effectiveness of the teaching of English, particularly writing, to raise standards in this subject.
- Develop effective links between subjects to add interest and relevance to activities.
- Ensure that careful evaluation is made of the influence of new initiatives on pupils' standards and progress.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sutherland Primary School, Stoke on Trent ST3 3DY

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly during my recent visit to your school. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. I found that yours is a good school, with some things that are outstanding.

You behave exceptionally well and you are very kind and considerate to each other. In lessons, you listen very carefully to what your teachers have to tell you and you always try hard. You enjoy coming to school and your attendance is getting better. You told me that you feel safe and secure. You know the importance of staying healthy and taking regular exercise. Many of you gave me very good advice on eating healthily. I was very interested to hear about the successes of the rowing club and the fitness sessions. You have many opportunities to do things after school. Your teachers look after you very well and listen to what you have to say. They work hard to help you learn.

I was very pleased to spend time with your school council. I was very impressed with the mature and very sensible approach with which they run their meetings. I found our discussion extremely interesting and informative.

I have made some suggestions to help the school get even better. Some of you do very well in tests. You could do even better, especially in English. I have asked your teachers to help you to improve your writing. You study many different subjects. I have asked your teachers to see if they can link more of these together in a way that will make learning even more interesting. The leaders of the school make plans to improve the school. I have asked them to check up more on how new initiatives make a difference to your learning.

Many things are already good and outstanding about your school and you, together with your teachers, can make it even better. Please keep working hard and doing the best you can. I wish you well in the future.

Jacqueline Wordsworth Her Majesty's Inspector

15 November 2007



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sutherland Primary School, Stoke on Trent ST3 3DY

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly during my recent visit to your school. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. I found that yours is a good school, with some things that are outstanding.

You behave exceptionally well and you are very kind and considerate to each other. In lessons, you listen very carefully to what your teachers have to tell you and you always try hard. You enjoy coming to school and your attendance is getting better. You told me that you feel safe and secure. You know the importance of staying healthy and taking regular exercise. Many of you gave me very good advice on eating healthily. I was very interested to hear about the successes of the rowing club and the fitness sessions. You have many opportunities to do things after school. Your teachers look after you very well and listen to what you have to say. They work hard to help you learn.

I was very pleased to spend time with your school council. I was very impressed with the mature and very sensible approach with which they run their meetings. I found our discussion extremely interesting and informative.

I have made some suggestions to help the school get even better. Some of you do very well in tests. You could do even better, especially in English. I have asked your teachers to help you to improve your writing. You study many different subjects. I have asked your teachers to see if they can link more of these together in a way that will make learning even more interesting. The leaders of the school make plans to improve the school. I have asked them to check up more on how new initiatives make a difference to your learning.

Many things are already good and outstanding about your school and you, together with your teachers, can make it even better. Please keep working hard and doing the best you can. I wish you well in the future.

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector