

South Hill Primary School

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1TT

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has created an exceedingly positive culture in the school. She has high expectations of herself, her staff and pupils. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and staff are proud to work at South Hill.
- The headteacher has built a very effective and committed leadership team. It is suitably placed to continue to improve the school further.
- Leaders have thought hard about the design of the curriculum. Pupils study a rich and vibrant curriculum, where learning builds upon their prior knowledge. They make good progress in a range of subjects.
- Pupils are happy, confident and well cared for. The school's focus on well-being ensures that their social and emotional needs are catered for well.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because leaders know the barriers faced by these pupils. This means good provision is in place to support their academic progress and emotional well-being.
- Pupils leave the school prepared for the next stage of their education. The vast majority now leave with the knowledge, skills and understanding expected of them by the end of their time in primary school.
- Children get off to a good start in early years. They experience good teaching in a nurturing environment and are ready for the transition to Year 1.
- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors now have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They hold leaders to account effectively.
- Teaching is good because most teachers have strong subject knowledge; they ask questions to make pupils think hard about their work and have high expectations for pupils.
- Outcomes have improved substantially since the previous inspection, especially in key stage 2. However, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is not in line with the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the few remaining inconsistencies in teaching by implementing and embedding the planned work of the recently formed teaching and learning team.
- Improve outcomes in key stage 1 so more pupils achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - planning activities that challenge pupils of all abilities to think hard about their work
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply their writing skills
 - making sure that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment in April 2017, the headteacher has established a strong leadership team. Together, they have brought about considerable improvement in all aspects of the school's work.
- There is a distinctively positive culture in the school. Staff morale is high, and leaders are well placed to continue to drive further improvement. Staff are happy, motivated and keen to do their best.
- Leaders prioritise the well-being of pupils and have established a specific team to lead this area of the school's work. The school identifies and promotes five ways to encourage pupils to stay healthy and active and to enjoy learning: 'connect, be active, take note, keep learning and give'. Consequently, the school is a calm, orderly place where pupils' social and emotional needs are catered for effectively.
- Leaders have thought carefully about the intent of the curriculum. It is planned to ensure that pupils can make links between subjects and that learning builds upon their prior knowledge. Teachers plan exciting topics, which give pupils real-life experiences, for example visits to local museums, musical events and the seaside. One pupil in Year 5 told an inspector that, 'trips help learning stick in our mind' and went on to explain how the historical enquiry skills learned when studying Anglo Saxons can be applied to other subject areas, such as geography or mathematics.
- Teachers responsible for leading a subject area do so with great passion and commitment. They have clear plans and know the correct actions to take to bring about further improvement. The leaders of English and mathematics have made a marked difference since they took up post. For example, the mathematics leader has introduced a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematical reasoning across the school. Consequently, pupils are now more confident in explaining their mathematical understanding and their approach to problem solving.
- Leaders spend additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. This is because leaders know the barriers faced by these pupils and provide support tailored to their needs. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that most disadvantaged pupils make good progress, including those who are the most able.
- Leaders ensure that the physical education (PE) and sport premium is spent well. Pupils have access to a wide range of sporting opportunities, including the 'daily mile', which is led by Year 6 sports ambassadors, along with cycling proficiency lessons for older pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) brings wide-ranging experience and a wealth of knowledge to her role. Leaders have improved their identification of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, which means that the right pupils are receiving the right support. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress from their different starting points. Pupils who have previously been excluded from other schools receive highly effective support. Leaders shared with inspectors strong evidence of the good academic progress made by these pupils.

- Parents and carers are positive about the school. They said that it is well led and managed and that pupils are taught well. One parent told an inspector, 'The school generates a vibrant, positive atmosphere, which encourages the children to make connections in their learning across different subjects.'
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Pupil have a range of opportunities to learn about the beliefs and cultures of different people.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school since the previous inspection. This support has been scaled back as leaders have proved their capacity to secure further improvement.
- Teachers value the professional development opportunities provided by the school. The recently created 'teaching and learning team' works to share good practice with all teachers. However, this is still in the early stages and needs time to become fully secure and to eliminate the few remaining inconsistencies in teaching.

Governance of the school

- Under the leadership of the experienced chair of governors, governance has improved since the previous inspection. She has trained and supported new governors who are now effective in their roles.
- Governors have an accurate knowledge of the school and provide support to leaders, but do not shirk their responsibility to challenge and hold them to account for how well pupils do. They do not take information provided by leaders at face value; they make regular visits to the school to check for themselves.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties with diligence. They hold leaders to account for the spending of funds to support disadvantaged pupils and check that this group of pupils are getting the support they need.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a culture of vigilance in school. Staff are trained regularly and know what to do if they have a concern about the welfare of a pupil. The designated safeguarding lead makes referrals to other agencies where appropriate. She follows these up with great tenacity to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the help they need.
- Pre-employment checks are carried out thoroughly. Governors make regular checks on the school's single central record to make sure that they fulfil all statutory requirements.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and their parents agree. One parent told an inspector, 'The staff work hard to make sure the children feel happy, safe and engaged.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, especially in key stage 2. They plan lessons which build upon prior learning and make links between different subjects in the curriculum.
- Adults have built very effective relationships with their pupils. Pupils are willing to share their ideas and thoughts in lessons because they feel safe to do so.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. There is a consistent approach in most classes across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge, ask well-timed questions to make pupils think hard and regularly recap mathematical concepts.
- Teachers provide pupils with a range of opportunities to apply literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, Year 5 pupils recently visited Chiltern Open Air Museum. Pupils went on to produce high-quality writing about their visit.
- In most classes, teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding. This means that they provide sufficient challenge, often adapting activities during lessons if pupils find work too easy.
- Homework is used appropriately to support learning in class. Pupils can choose an activity to complete that is linked to their class topic. The quality of homework produced has improved since the new system has been introduced.
- Teaching assistants are very effective. They are knowledgeable, trained well and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. For example, in an English lesson in Year 4, a teaching assistant intervened well to make pupils think how they could improve their vocabulary choices. As a result, pupils produced good-quality writing.
- Teachers plan sequences of lessons to give pupils opportunities to apply their learning in one subject in other subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils drew on their geographical and scientific knowledge to choose a new place they would like to live, explaining why. In music lessons, pupils were applying their understanding of odd and even numbers to help them keep a steady rhythm.
- In key stage 1, some pupils do not have enough opportunity to apply their developing literacy skills in their written work. Sometimes teachers set work for pupils that is too easy and does not provide sufficient challenge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy and confident and are cared for well. They are keen to learn, and take pride in their written work.
- Pupils celebrate the differences between themselves and others, showing high levels of compassion. One pupil told an inspector, 'The school treats everyone equally. We are all taught the same, but adaptations are made to suit the needs of some children.'

- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and know what to do if they experience bullying. However, they said that it rarely happens in school. One pupil told an inspector, 'If anyone is mean, then adults deal with it quickly.'
- Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe. They know about the risks of social media and the internet. Local police community support officers visit the school regularly to deliver e-safety sessions with older pupils and their parents.
- The lunchtime 'nurture club' provides a calm and relaxing place for pupils who need social and emotional support. These pupils interact well with adults and are supported to develop positive relationships with their peers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They respond quickly to instructions given to them by adults. There is a mutual respect between adults and pupils in this school.
- Year 6 prefects carry out their additional responsibilities with great diligence. They support younger pupils in the playground, making sure that they are safe, along with ensuring that other pupils walk to and from assembly in silence. They help the school to be a calm and orderly place.
- Adults support a small number of pupils who display challenging behaviour extremely well. For example, the school's learning mentor meets regularly with these pupils to provide support where needed; because of this support, pupils remain in school.
- The attendance and welfare officer knows families well and provides good support to help improve the attendance of pupils who do not attend school regularly. The result of her work means that whole-school attendance has improved over the last three years and is now broadly in line with the national average, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- In a small number of cases, when teaching is not matched well enough to different pupils' needs, some pupils can lose concentration, which results in low-level disruption.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Historic underachievement at the end of key stage 2 has been halted. This means that the vast majority of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 attain the knowledge, skills and understanding expected of them by the end of their time in primary school. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils in key stage 2 make strong progress in mathematics and English. This is because the curriculum is well designed to ensure that new learning builds upon what pupils already know. For example, pupils' writing in Year 5 is of a high standard because language features that pupils learn in Year 4 are revised, built upon and applied in pupils' current written work.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points. Adults support these pupils well and provide a range of interventions that are closely matched to their needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of the well-planned support they receive. For example, some pupils benefit from being taught a concept before they learn about it in class. This means that they are well prepared for lessons.
- Most-able pupils in key stage 2 receive a good level of challenge. They are made to think hard about their work and, consequently, make good progress.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 has been below the national average for the past two years. Most of the current pupils in key stage 1 are doing increasingly well from their starting points and are now making good progress in these subjects. However, where inconsistencies in the quality of teaching still exist, some of the most able pupils are not making as much progress because their capabilities are underestimated.
- Pupils learn, and develop, knowledge and skills well in subjects other than English and mathematics because of the effective curriculum. They make links to prior learning and can apply knowledge learned in one subject to other areas. This means that pupils make good progress in subjects such as music, PE and history.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' book is of a high standard, in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Leaders are highly aspirational for pupils. Pupils are clear that they can achieve whatever they want to when they leave school. One girl in Year 5 told an inspector, 'When I'm older, my job is going to be based on maths because I'm going to be an engineer.'
- Music is a strength of the school, with all pupils in key stage 2 learning to play the ukulele. An inspector observed a singing assembly where all pupils joined in, singing to a high standard with great enthusiasm.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge broadly typical for children their age. They go on to make good progress in early years because of good teaching and a rich curriculum. They are ready and well prepared to move into Year 1.
- Even though children had only been in school for three weeks at the time of the inspection, classroom routines were already established. Children are independent in their learning and can access a range of resources and toys without adult help. Children tidy their resources away with great care when directed to do so by an adult.
- Children behave exceptionally well and cooperate effectively with each other. There is a calm environment, which means that children become engaged in activities quickly. They listen and respond quickly to adults' instructions.
- There are very positive relationships between adults and children. The nurturing environment that adults create means that the Reception classes are happy places to be.

- Adults work well together to plan learning opportunities that allow children to make strong progress. When needed, they adapt what they have planned to meet the interests of the children.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weakness of the provision. They evaluate their work and have plans in place to continue to improve.
- Children have a growing breadth of knowledge and are confident in sharing this with adults. For example, one child gave an inspector an apple pip and told them, 'If you plant this in dirt at home, it will grow into a big tree. You can get more apples.'
- The outdoor area is less well developed than the indoor space as a rich environment for learning. Leaders have plans in place to improve it.

School details

Unique reference number	117110
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053036

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Juliette Woodford
Headteacher	Sarah Winter
Telephone number	01442 402127
Website	www.southhill.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@southhill.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school has grown in size since the previous inspection and now has two classes in every year group, except Year 6. The school is now larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- Provision in early years takes two Reception classes, with all children attending full time.
- The headteacher took up her post in April 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning across all year groups. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussion were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the school business manager, other leaders, member of the 'well-being team' and a group of five governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors assessed the quality of pupils' learning by scrutinising a range of written work in subjects across the curriculum, and through discussions with pupils. Inspectors also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils during the inspection to discuss various aspects of the school.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information on pupils' achievement, and records of the school's safeguarding arrangements and of the governing body's work.
- Inspectors spoke to parents in the playground at the start of the inspection. Account was also taken of the 125 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the comments of 63 parents on the Parent View free-text service. Inspectors also took account of the 35 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lou Nelson	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector

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