

South Avenue Primary School

South Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4SU

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership for the school. She has worked successfully and with great determination to create one school community after the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools.
- The headteacher is very ably supported by the assistant headteacher. They have developed a strong team of senior leaders who share the commitment and ambition to provide the best possible learning and personal experiences for pupils. There is a clear focus on ensuring that pupils develop as well-rounded individuals.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. As a result, pupils make good progress although it is a little uneven across the school.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons and activities and pupils enjoy their learning. Staff are encouraged and supported to increase and enrich their skills and practice to provide the best for pupils.
- The successful strategies to broaden pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not used consistently in all classes.
- All groups of pupils learn well and make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects as well as in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders are rightly aware that the most able pupils, in particular, do not always make the progress they are capable of in order to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Governors know the school well and contribute significantly to its strategic direction. They are supportive of the leadership of the school and challenge leaders on all aspects of the school's performance. They have an in-depth knowledge of how well the school is performing.
- Children in the Reception classes get off to a good start. They make rapid progress from their starting points. They enjoy coming to school and are well taught, so they are ready to continue learning in Year 1.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Staff effectively support the few pupils who find managing their own behaviour more difficult.
- Pupils are friendly and polite and respectful of each other and adults. They feel safe and are well looked after.
- Pupils are increasingly reading for pleasure and with enjoyment. Leaders have correctly identified a continuing focus on the further development of pupils' reading skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on pupils' increasing enjoyment of reading for pleasure to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress in developing their reading skills and achieve higher standards.
- Ensure that the successful strategies and high expectations that help to broaden pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding at a greater depth are used consistently in all classes.
- Provide greater challenge, for the most able pupils in particular, to ensure that more pupils work at a higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership for the school. She has worked resolutely to successfully create one school community from the two predecessor schools. She inspires staff and has gained their confidence and respect. One member of staff wrote: 'The headteacher has worked really hard to achieve one school, a motivated staff and the best outcomes for pupils.'
- Senior leadership is strong because leaders have been carefully appointed to utilise their skills and experience. They are encouraged to develop and enhance their expertise. One leader commented: 'The headteacher finds our best qualities and enhances them. We're all encouraged to contribute; we work well in strong, linked teams. We can challenge and present our ideas.' Teachers new to their careers are supported effectively.
- The monitoring work of middle leaders helps them accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and areas of responsibility. This informs their action plans for improvement and enables them to provide effective guidance and support to colleagues. Senior leaders have correctly identified that there is scope for some middle leaders to have an even greater impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders, including governors, share the ambition and determination to provide the best for pupils. They are fully aware, however, of the need to sustain the momentum of the school's continuing improvement and further strengthen pupils' achievement.
- Effective monitoring of all aspects of the school's work gives leaders an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas for further development. School development plans reflect this information and show the commitment to further, continuous school improvement. The capacity to do this has been demonstrated.
- Rigorous checks are made on pupils' progress. Systems for tracking progress are incisive and the information is used effectively to make sure additional support is quickly provided and no pupils are left behind. Well-targeted, appropriate interventions support groups and individuals.
- Checks are made on the quality of teaching and learning. The performance management system is established and ensures that teachers are accountable for pupils' progress. Where any weaknesses are identified, support and coaching are provided and improvement is expected.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with an appropriate focus on improving pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. There are interesting and purposeful links in learning which give pupils opportunities to apply their skills in meaningful ways. Leaders acknowledge that these opportunities could be extended to further enrich pupils' learning. The recently introduced Golden Curriculum for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the Silver Curriculum, which provides nurture sessions for individuals and small groups, provide valuable support and help pupils to learn more effectively in their classes.

- The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors to school. Special themed events such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) week give pupils opportunities to invent, problem-solve and design, and provide pupils with memorable learning experiences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values are promoted well through the school's values and the ethos of the school.
- Some pupils in the school have specific and complex social, learning and behavioural needs. Senior leaders ensure that pupils, whatever their needs, have equal opportunities. Pupils learn without fear of discrimination of any kind. The school's inclusive ethos and the focus on pupils' personal as well as their academic development mean that staff do all they can to reduce any barriers to learning. Additional funding is used effectively to achieve this aim.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that effective use is made of the pupil premium funding to improve achievement for disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able. Effective action is taken to enable this group of pupils to catch up and achieve well.
- Good use is made of the primary physical education and sport premium to effectively extend the existing strong provision. Working with sports coaches, for example, enhances the skills of pupils and teachers and, therefore, improves outcomes for pupils.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View were positive about the school and the education and care their children receive. One parent wrote: 'All staff go above and beyond to support and teach my child; she always comes out happy and excited to tell us what she has been learning.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body is led well by the chair of the governing body who is also a trustee of the academy. Governors know the school well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where it can improve further.
- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support to leaders. They are well informed by the headteacher and other leaders as well as from their own monitoring visits. This enables them to hold leaders to account effectively for the school's performance. Governors have the appropriate skills and experience to do so.
- Governors ask questions about the achievement of different groups of pupils. They check that additional funding is used effectively to determine that it is making a difference for pupils.
- Governors ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety and well-being are paramount. There is a culture of safeguarding

embedded in the school and as a result pupils feel safe and are confident to turn to adults if they have any problems.

- Almost all parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school keeps their children safe.
- The well-being leader is the main designated safeguarding leader. In addition, five other staff are also trained in this role. This ensures that there is always a highly effective, trained safeguarding lead available to staff, should they have a concern.
- Staff know that they are all responsible for pupils' welfare and safety. Regular and appropriate training ensures that they are very clear about what to do if they have any concerns. Staff are vigilant in raising concerns so that pupils are quickly provided with appropriate support when necessary.
- Leaders ensure that the safeguarding systems and processes are rigorous and fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Where necessary, there are effective links with parents and outside agencies.
- All of the required checks are made on the suitability of adults to work in the school. These are recorded carefully on a single central register, which is checked regularly by the chair of the governing body, who is the child protection governor.
- The school site is secure and daily risk assessments are conducted to ensure that there are no hazards for pupils.
- Appropriate procedures and care plans are in place for pupils with specific medical conditions to ensure their well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Teachers know their pupils well and encourage them to do their best. As a result, pupils work hard and want to do well. Good behaviour supports pupils' good progress.
- Teachers ensure that classrooms are stimulating and attractive places to learn. Excellent displays of work in progress are used very effectively as tools for teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants often make a very good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly where teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together as observed in a Year 5 class. They also provide good support for individuals and small groups. However, on occasion teaching assistants are managing tasks rather than promoting learning.
- The teaching of reading has been a focus for the school. Teachers now have a good impact on promoting pupils' enjoyment of reading and influencing pupils' reading choices. One pupil, for example, who visited the book swap shop, said that she had chosen a poetry book because they had been reading poems in class. Another said that he enjoyed the book read in class so much that he wanted to read another one by the same author. The introduction of an internet-based reading programme has motivated pupils to read, especially boys. There are incentives for pupils to read more widely and regularly at home. Teacher-led, small-group sessions support pupils' comprehension skills. These sessions are generally taught well but are not of the same good quality in

all classes.

- Phonics skills are taught well and used effectively by pupils to help them read unfamiliar words. These skills get them off to a good start in the early years and key stage 1.
- Teachers now use consistent approaches to teaching handwriting and spelling, and punctuation and grammar, which were identified as the weaker aspects of writing. Writing in pupils' books is often of high quality and reflects pupils' understanding of the features of different types of writing.
- Teachers have focused on mental mathematics, which has had a very positive impact on improving pupils' skills. The current focus is on reasoning skills and mastery of mathematical concepts, including using a range of resources to promote learning at a greater depth.
- Within the overall good quality of teaching and learning, there are occasions when the very successful strategies used to broaden the skills, knowledge and understanding of pupils of all abilities are not consistently evident across all classes. As a consequence, pupils sometimes do not learn as well as they should. The demands made on the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenging to enable them to achieve high standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, take pride in their school and their work and enjoy all that they do.
- Leaders provide good support for pupils' emotional and social development as well as their academic achievement. Staff go the extra mile to protect and nurture pupils' well-being and support pupils and their families who may be vulnerable.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say that bullying is very rare but if any incidents occur they are confident that adults will listen to them and deal with any issues. They know the difference between different types of bullying and that sometimes friends just fall out. They have a good awareness of how to keep safe in and out of school and are particularly aware of issues around e-safety.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club have a safe, healthy and sociable start to the school day. The provision has helped to improve attendance.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school keeps their children safe and that pupils are happy at school and well looked after.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons, around the school, at lunchtime and in the

playground. On a few occasions when learning tasks do not sustain pupils' concentration, some pupils can become distracted and lose their focus on learning.

- The systems for managing the behaviour of a few pupils with particular and often complex needs are effective. Procedures are implemented consistently by staff and expectations are well known by pupils. Pupils with specific needs are focused as quickly as possible on their learning and any unacceptable behaviour does not interrupt the learning of others.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View agree that pupils behave well. Some pupils feel that a few pupils could behave better in class and in the playground but said that behaviour is better than it used to be.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. Although attendance has improved, it remains below average. Leaders do all they can to promote regular attendance. As a result, there has been an improvement for some pupils with previously high absences and the number of pupils with persistent absence has reduced. Leaders analyse the attendance of different groups and work with families where attendance issues persist.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In the two years after the schools amalgamated, pupils' outcomes reflected the varied quality of teaching that pupils received, especially in key stage 2. Leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching and, as a result, pupils are doing better and achieving well, although there continues to be some unevenness in the progress across the school.
- Pupils' work in their books and the school's information about progress for pupils currently in the school show that pupils overall are making good progress from their starting points. However, progress is a little uneven across the classes and progress in reading is not as strong as in writing or mathematics. Most pupils are on track to reach the expected attainment for their age by the end of the year.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standards for their age by the end of Year 6 was above that found nationally in writing, just below in mathematics and considerably lower in reading. Too few pupils achieved high standards.
- By the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standards for their age was above that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching a greater depth was above that found nationally in writing but below in reading and mathematics.
- Progress between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 in 2016 was not significantly different from that found nationally in writing and mathematics but it was significantly below that found nationally in reading.
- Disadvantaged pupils are achieving increasingly well and often make rapid gains in their learning. This is as a result of rigorous tracking of their progress and the provision of appropriate support to reduce barriers to learning. A range of successful strategies ensures that these pupils achieve as well as possible.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. The provision is well led and pupils' needs are accurately

identified, with appropriate support provided to help them overcome their difficulties.

- Phonics skills are taught well. Although there was a slight dip in 2016, an above average proportion of pupils usually reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils use their phonics skills well to help them read and write.
- Pupils demonstrate an increasing enjoyment of reading for pleasure. Older pupils often read with fluency and confidence and can express personal preferences for different authors and styles of writing. Leaders are fully aware, however, that there needs to be a continued focus on developing pupils' reading skills, particularly in key stage 2.
- The most able pupils currently in the school, including those who are disadvantaged, are generally challenged to achieve well. Leaders have correctly identified, however, that challenges should be greater and expectations higher to ensure that this group consistently achieves high standards in their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are generally below those typical for their age. In the current Reception Year, a higher proportion than usual started with skills well below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language skills, number, reading and writing. Children's understanding of health and self-care, however, were a strength.
- Children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good and often very rapid progress to catch up in the Reception Year and are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been above that found nationally.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know the children very well. They assess them when they join the school and monitor progress in their learning and their personal development. Extra help is quickly provided for those children who need it, including for those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children's behaviour is good. Children settle well into the routines of the day and play and learn well together. They develop confidence and independence.
- Effective leadership of the early years ensures that all the safeguarding and welfare requirements appropriate to this age group are met. Children are well cared for and nurtured, so they develop confidence and are eager to join in activities. Staff ensure that children are kept safe and learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Children enjoyed discussing healthy eating, drawing on the story of 'The very hungry caterpillar', which they had shared the previous day.
- The leader knows the strengths of the provision and what could be even better. Staff rightly ensure that there is a particularly strong focus on developing children's communication and reading and writing skills. The indoor and outdoor spaces are used effectively to provide interesting and engaging activities across all areas of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	140521
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10032490

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Watton
Headteacher	Diane Browning
Telephone number	01795 477750
Website	www.southavenue.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@southavenue.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- South Avenue Primary converted to become an academy school in January 2014. When its predecessor school, South Avenue Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall. In September 2014, the school amalgamated with South Avenue Junior School. When the junior school was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate overall and requiring special measures.
- The school is part of the Fulston Manor Academies Trust.
- The current headteacher was appointed to lead the predecessor infant school in September 2013. She became the acting headteacher of the primary school when the infant and junior schools amalgamated and, subsequently, the substantive headteacher.
- South Avenue is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group.

- There is provision for the early years in two Reception classes, which children attend full time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes. Several observations were conducted jointly with the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and examined work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. They also talked to pupils about reading and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, other senior leaders and staff with key leadership responsibilities. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and the chief education officer of the academy trust.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including: leaders' checks on the school's performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 49 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which included seven written responses, and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of 24 responses to the questionnaire for staff and nine responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Karon Buck	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Baxter	Ofsted Inspector

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