

Sledmere Primary School

The School Drive, Off Buffery Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY2 8EH

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2016

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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leadership and governance have maintained a good quality of education for pupils since the school's previous inspection.
- Outstanding management, teaching and oversight of the early years provision enables Nursery and Reception children to get off to an excellent start, particularly in early literacy and mathematics. This high standard has been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Good teaching and effective assessments help teachers and leaders to monitor pupils' progress accurately. This enables staff to plan a stimulating curriculum and a range of activities that engage and interest pupils so that they achieve well.
- In all year groups an increasing proportion of pupils reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there is still scope for more pupils to reach higher standards in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well and make good progress. Pupils who are in the very early stages of learning English or who speak no English when they join the school make rapid progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive good teaching and support. These pupils, including those who have the potential to reach higher standards, achieve well.
- Teachers and support staff make sure that pupils are kept safe and are highly committed to pupils' care and well-being
- Pupils are courteous, respectful of others and well behaved. The school makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about major world religions, faiths, customs and beliefs. They respect the views of others and the school successfully fosters a respect for British values. This prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain – an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Although pupils achieve well overall, some of the teaching, and the work pupils do, is not challenging enough. In some lessons, teachers do not adapt the work they prepare, or the questions they ask, to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders have listed a number of relevant priorities to guide their actions in the school's 'raising attainment plan'. However, the list of actions set out in the plan is too long and some actions lack clarity. This makes it difficult for leaders to gauge the impact of their actions on raising pupils' achievement across the curriculum and to focus on the most important areas that will improve teaching still further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teachers and support staff provide pupils with the right level of challenge in all lessons by:
 - adapting questions and the work planned to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, rather than going over too much old ground
 - providing more of what the most effective teachers refer to as 'challenge tasks', to check that pupils fully understand what they have learned and whether there are any gaps in their knowledge and understanding
 - checking that pupils understand why mistakes have been corrected, and provide time for pupils to correct their work while it is fresh in their minds.
- Build on the improvements made to pupils' achievement by raising standards in reading and mathematics by:
 - providing more challenging books and texts for pupils to read independently or with guidance
 - encouraging and facilitating opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to read more widely and often, so as to raise the profile, value and importance of reading
 - providing more opportunities in mathematics lessons and when planning homework for pupils to apply their mathematics skills to more varied and challenging problems
 - adapting tasks in mathematics lessons to help the most able pupils to use and apply more logical thinking rather than relying too much on trial and error when solving complex problems or calculations.
- Make sure that leaders, staff and governors set out the most important actions that need to be carried out in the raising attainment plan to:
 - gauge how much progress is being made in raising the standards that pupils reach in subjects across the curriculum, including English and mathematics
 - provide greater clarity about the pace of improvement, particularly those actions aimed at improving still further the quality of teaching across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- 'Strive, progress and succeed' is the motto that greets pupils, parents and visitors as they enter the school gate. The motto accurately represents the ambitious culture that is upheld by pupils, parents, leaders, governors and staff.
- All parents and carers spoken to by inspectors paid tribute to the headteacher and staff team, reflecting high levels of satisfaction with the care and education provided for their children. The majority of responses from parents, messages sent to Ofsted and responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, reflect a good level of satisfaction.
- Parents are right. Senior leaders are strong and effective. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and governors are skilled and proactive leaders. They work closely with parents and the local community to exercise their roles and responsibilities effectively in maintaining a good quality of education for all pupils.
- Leaders check pupils' workbooks and provide guidance and support where needed to continually improve teaching and learning. Leaders offer guidance and feedback to teachers and support staff, which is backed up by training and continuous professional development. Staff development has been particularly successful in training and mentoring newly qualified teachers. Staff morale is high, and this is reflected in the high levels of satisfaction expressed by staff in the questionnaire.
- The headteacher is a strong leader. He works closely with senior and phase leaders to manage, monitor and evaluate the school's work. The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are highly skilled and robust in using accurate assessments with teachers to check pupils' progress regularly. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher work effectively with vulnerable families to make sure that pupils are safe, for example when not attending school, and they follow up persistent absence.
- The assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher work with staff responsible for the oversight and management of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Working with each phase leader, the staff make sure that these pupils receive effective support and intervention.
- The school's curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of each year group. It includes interesting themes that sit alongside subjects of the national curriculum, including religious education, a modern foreign language (French) and, for older pupils in Years 5 and 6, sex and relationships education. The assistant headteacher oversees curriculum plans to make sure that pupils cover core skills in all subjects.
- The staff make a significant contribution to pupils' welfare and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths, customs and traditions through religious education, the arts, music, themed topics, projects and educational visits. 'I love learning to speak French', stated one pupil, and her classmates agreed that this and other subjects make learning and school 'really good fun', as another pupil put it. The school is successful in promoting a strong emphasis on British values of tolerance, respect for democracy and equality, which prepares pupils very well for life in modern multicultural Britain.

- Leaders and governors make good use of additional funding and monitor its impact. The primary school physical education sport premium is used well to provide a range of opportunities and resources for pupils to engage in team games, sports and activities that promote healthy and active lifestyles.
- The performance management of staff is well managed by the governing body and senior leaders. This ensures that salary progression is closely linked to good or outstanding teaching performance. Where underperformance is identified, appropriate support plans and accountability measures are put in place to ensure that teachers improve their practice.
- The raising attainment plan (RAP) is informed by thorough audits and accurate evaluations of pupils' achievement and teaching. Reviews are wide-ranging and include half-termly pupil progress checks; assessments of the rate of progress that different groups and individuals make; and the results of phase leaders' reviews of pupils' work and lessons. However, the RAP lists too many actions, some of which are just a checklist of what needs to be done. As a result, the core priorities are masked by less urgent actions.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. Leaders have, rightly, identified that some of the teaching requires improvement. The RAP makes clear who is assigned the task of monitoring the impact of actions to improve achievement and teaching. However, the plan is not focusing enough on key monitoring activities that will have the most impact on improving teaching in some classes.
- The local authority has been effective in challenging and supporting the school. For example, following the 2015 national test results the local authority's school improvement team identified some relative weaknesses in key areas, such as achievement in reading and mathematics, for the school to focus on improving in key stage 2. The school's leaders and staff responded well; improving the achievement of some vulnerable groups, such as disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's actions have been effective in addressing these weaknesses and show a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good and the governing body is skilfully led by a very competent and experienced chair.
- Governors keep in regular touch with the school's leaders so that they can hold them and the staff team to account for standards achieved and staff performance.
- Governors have been diligent in recruiting strong leaders and they ensure that newly appointed teachers are supported, trained, monitored and challenged to continually improve their practice.
- Governors receive regular updates about pupils' progress and achievement. The assessment information shared is accurate and enables the governing body to challenge underperformance.
- The finance committee of the governing body monitors pupil premium funding effectively. The curriculum committee scrutinises the performance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils to make sure that any differences between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally continues to diminish.
- The results of national assessments and the school's assessment information enables governors to see how well particular groups of pupils are achieving. For example,

leaders and governors have invested a great deal in staff and resources to make sure that pupils in the very early stages of learning English make at least good progress.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the most important priorities related to pupils' achievement and progress, although greater emphasis is now needed on sustaining improvements to pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership team and governors have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and that staff recruitment and vetting are rigorous. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Every member of staff and all the governors understand their roles in relation to child protection procedures. They know what to do and who to ask to seek advice about the safety and welfare of pupils, and on referring concerns on to designated staff within the school and local authority.
- Teachers, and support and administrative staff, are well trained and vigilant. Administrative staff diligently check and verify the identity of visitors, including inspectors, when they arrive at school.
- Both governors and staff keep up to date with legal requirements and undertake regular reviews of the school's child protection and safeguarding policies. The safety and well-being of children in the early years (Nursery and Reception classes) is very well managed and the early years welfare requirements are fully met.
- Pupils and the parents spoken to by inspectors were unanimous in their belief that pupils are safe in school. Pupils say that the staff and other pupils make them feel very safe, valued and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Assessment information, pupils' work in books and observations of lessons show that the teaching across the school is effective and, as a result, pupils make strong progress in all year groups.
- Workbooks show that pupils are expected to do their best and teachers usually set high expectations in lessons for presentation, behaviour and learning. One pupil commented, 'We are expected to do our best and teachers help us a lot'. Pupils are right. Teachers help pupils to achieve well, including disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Leaders and staff use assessment information very well to ensure that there is a good balance of whole-class teaching and targeted support for pupils when taught in small groups. Some specialised intervention programmes have been carefully tailored to meet the needs of specific groups. For example, those in the early stages of learning English receive well-focused support, including bilingual intervention and opportunities to improve their knowledge of letter sounds and words when reading aloud to an adult.
- Leaders have adapted assessment information very well to transfer from previous national curriculum levels to the revised national curriculum that measures pupils' progress in relation to age-related standards. Teachers use assessment criteria, such

as 'can do' statements which are pasted into pupils' books, to provide learning targets for pupils to aim for. Pupils and teachers use these well to check pupils' progress towards an age-related standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Teachers' questioning is often purposeful and encourages pupils to explain their answers fully in complete sentences. Occasionally, however, the questions posed by teachers or support staff do not extend pupils' thinking enough to deepen their understanding, and this slows progress. In addition, the tasks that some teachers plan for pupils to complete are not being adapted well enough to extend their knowledge and understanding. For example, some pupils complete work quickly and have to wait before moving on to what teachers call 'challenge tasks'.
- Teachers' marking is usually thorough and helpful to pupils, especially when pupils write independently, for example in English writing books, topic work or science. When pupils write independently, teachers and support staff help and encourage them to improve their first attempts in their 'draft book'. Pupils are then given opportunities to check and reflect on their work before improving it, although some still continue to make unnecessary spelling and punctuation errors.
- Teachers and support staff check how well pupils read using individual reading diaries. The teaching of reading in the early years and key stage 1 is highly effective. In particular, the phonics screening test results show that both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils make rapid progress in improving their basic reading skills. Across the school pupils enjoy reading both fiction and non-fiction, although as pupils advance through key stage 2 too many are not reading often or widely enough.
- Pupils' workbooks and assessments, as well as the lessons observed during the inspection, show that the teaching of mathematics is effective in most classes. However, some of the teaching is not challenging enough for all pupils. The most able pupils and those capable of reaching age-related standards are not always being challenged to think logically when solving problems in mathematics lessons and can rely too much on trial and error when solving complex problems or calculations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils respond very well to learning in lessons and the good opportunities that they have for reflection in assemblies, and when studying special topics or themes. British values, such as respect for law and democracy, are clearly reflected in the way pupils are involved in their school community as elected school councillors or ambassadors who care for the environment. This makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral and social development.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is excellent. Pupils learn a lot about staying safe and healthy. For example, pupils can explain the precautions they need to take when using computers, including the use of the internet or text messaging on mobile devices. Pupils say that bullying is very rare. Pupils confirmed that the few incidents, such as name-calling or when friends fall out, are dealt with very well by leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Pupils are energised by the range of subjects and topics that they study and the

activities and visits provided by the school. The school's indoor and outdoor environment and resources are well maintained, clean and stimulating, which is appreciated and respected by pupils. They willingly offer to tidy up after eating their lunchtime meal or sandwich and there is no litter or unkempt area of the school, reflecting how well pupils care for their school community.

- Leaders and staff are successful in tackling any form of discrimination in a cohesive and supportive school community. Special topics, cultural and religious festivals and celebrations, and the wide range of educational visits or visitors, improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different cultural, religious and ethnic traditions that exist in the United Kingdom and beyond. These activities make a very positive contribution to pupils' cultural development and are an improvement since the school's previous inspection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are keen to answer questions, share ideas or contribute to discussions in lessons. During a writing lesson, for example, when asked to improve sentences, pupils in Year 5 offered suggestions by helping each other to deduce how best to rewrite a complex sentence.
- Pupils form positive and trusting relationships with other pupils and staff. They are usually attentive and well behaved in lessons and at other times. In some lessons, however, if the work provided for them is not demanding enough, they lose interest and sit for periods of time without learning or making progress. Nonetheless, it is very rare to see any pupils disrupting lessons or interrupting the work of other pupils, even when they are not being challenged enough.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in attendance rates that are improving and are now in line with those of most primary schools. There is very effective monitoring and supervision of the few pupils who arrive late for school. Leaders and staff are vigilant and keep regular contact with families to ensure that pupils are safe and attend punctually. Persistent absence rates are reducing because of positive relationships with families and robust follow-up measures if pupils do not attend school. For example, the staff carry out daily checks if pupils do not attend to ensure that pupils are safe when not in school. The school works closely with the local authority and is doing all it can to help and challenge the small number of families whose children are persistently absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in the school, in all year groups, have made good progress over time. Last year's national assessments (2015) and test results in key stage 1 improved significantly compared with previous years, building on the excellent start made in the early years. In key stage 2, the 2015 national tests showed that the overall attainment of pupils in reading and mathematics was below the national average and was average in writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. This represented good progress in writing and, at that time, progress in reading and mathematics was average compared with other schools nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities in all year groups make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Support work and interventions in key stage 2 lessons, particularly English and mathematics lessons where pupils are organised into groups of similar ability, are effective in helping pupils who find learning difficult to catch up with others.

- The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is highly effective, resulting in the large majority of pupils reaching the required standard in Year 1 and nearly all pupils reaching the standard by the end of Year 2. This lays secure foundations for early reading and literacy by the time that pupils start key stage 2.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. The school's accurate assessments of these pupils show that disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as other pupils. At this stage of the school year there is no national comparative information to see how their progress compares with other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. However, the work seen in pupils' books, school assessment information and the lessons observed during the inspection all point to good progress in relation to their starting points.
- It is not possible to compare the most recent national test results (2016) for pupils in Year 6 as this was the first year that the revised national curriculum tests were administered and there are different attainment criteria compared to the previous years' tests.
- Current assessments show that pupils are making good progress in relation to their low starting points when they joined the school. Assessment information also shows that the most able pupils are achieving well overall. An increasing proportion are demonstrating secure knowledge and understanding in relation to the new age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education (key stage 3) in their secondary schools.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language make rapid progress, building on the very good foundations laid in the early years and key stage 1. It is significant to note that approximately one in three pupils who join the school have little or no spoken English. By the time they finish key stage 1 and key stage 2, the large majority of these pupils reach the standards expected for their age.
- Across a range of subjects, pupils make good progress in writing, which is also reflected in well-formed handwriting and mostly accurate spelling. Although their progress is improving, pupils in some classes make relatively slower progress in reading and mathematics compared with writing because of some inconsistencies in the expectations that teachers set. Pupils are not reading often or widely enough to practise and consolidate their reading skills. In mathematics, some of the teaching does not provide enough challenging problem-solving work and pupils tend to use trial and error to calculate more complex problems.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The children make very good progress in early phonics, reading, writing and mathematics, which prepares them well for Year 1. One in three children join the early years with little or no spoken English. These children soon engage with adults and other children, learning songs, nursery rhymes and traditional stories. The children soon pick up and use conversational English during the varied and stimulating indoor and outdoor activities that they experience with their classmates.
- Most three- and four-year-old children start school with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. Outstanding teaching and strong pastoral support for both children and families in the Nursery and Reception classes are getting the youngest children off to an excellent start. The integration of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very effective, enabling the children to make outstanding progress.
- Outcomes are improving well. Over half of the children reach a good level of development in early literacy (reading and writing) and mathematics by the time they start Year 1. Although this is below the national average, this represents very good progress in relation to the children's low starting points and is improving. Good use is made of additional pupil premium funding for children from disadvantaged families. They make outstanding progress, particularly in other communication skills such as listening and speaking with understanding. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in these communication skills is close to the national average.
- Throughout the early years children play safely and settle into school quickly. The inspection took place when children were just starting their first few days of school. In both the Nursery and Reception classes the children were already engaging and developing communication and mathematics skills in role play activities, dressing up, gathering and counting shapes, and handling utensils skilfully in outdoor wet and dry areas when experimenting with tactile resources such as water, sand, dough and rice. Children were already thriving and settling in well.
- At the time of the inspection the early years staff were dressed in traditional clothing to celebrate the Islamic festival of Eid-ul-Adha with the children. The children were happily writing; skilfully and accurately holding pencils and crayons to make special Eid cards to take home to their families. The celebration of the major world faiths and cultural traditions is taught and respected, making a significant contribution to the children's spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- The teaching and support provided for children in both the Nursery and Reception classes is of high quality. Many children, for example, were keen to point out to an inspector what they were doing when using small nets to scoop up and count coloured balls made from gelatine in one of the wet tables. 'Look', said one child enthusiastically, 'they squish up and look like circles'. Children share and communicate with each other like this with increasing confidence, skill and enjoyment.
- A continuous focus on spoken English is helping children who speak both English and another home language to settle quickly. This is reassuring for their parents and carers. The parents whose children are just joining Year 1 spoke to inspectors and confirmed that they are very pleased with their children's progress last year, and paid tribute to the early years staff team.

- Adults engage with both children and their parents or carers so that early relationships with families are strong and trusting. Home visits are carefully planned before children start school to make sure that parents are familiar with the school's expectations and that there is a smooth transition for the children when they first come to the Nursery or one of three Reception classes.
- The leadership and management of the early years are very effective in providing children with an outstanding start to their schooling. In addition to home visits, the staff liaise with other early years settings at the school's partners in the learning trust to undertake accurate assessments of children's needs and abilities. Assessments are regular and help to monitor how well each individual child is doing, as well as providing parents with remarkable evidence of their children's progress and development in the children's 'learning journeys' (ongoing written and pictorial evidence kept in books).

School details

Unique reference number	103772
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10000466

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	567
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Snow
Headteacher	Damian Ward
Telephone number	01384818425
Website	http://www.sledmere.org/
Email address	data@sledmere.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Sledmere is a very large primary school and is growing. The school has increased the numbers it admits to its Reception Year since the previous inspection. As a result, in three years' time every year group will consist of three classes.
- The school has early years provision comprising a Nursery class for three-year-old children who attend part-time in the morning or afternoon; and three Reception classes for four and five-year-olds who attend full-time.
- The school is part of a collaborative trust with four other schools, including a nursery school. This partnership supports training, staff development and leadership across the five schools.
- Nearly half of the pupils are of white British heritage. Other pupils come from a range of backgrounds representing minority ethnic groups, the largest of which (over a third

of all pupils) is of Pakistani heritage. Just over two fifths of pupils speak English as an additional language and approximately one third of pupils who join the school, particularly in the early years (Nursery or Reception), speak little or no English.

- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above that of most schools.
- The 2015 national test results show that the school met the floor standards which, at that time, were the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- In addition to lesson observations, some of which were carried out with senior leaders, inspectors reviewed pupils' recorded work and met with groups of pupils to discuss their work, behaviour and safety, or to hear them read. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally during break and lunchtimes to ask them their views about the school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and safety in the playground and at other times during each of the two days of inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: leaders' and governors' own evaluations of the school's effectiveness; the raising attainment plan; information about pupils' achievement, progress and performance; the governing body's action plan; phase leaders' action plans; and information related to teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior and phase leaders and other members of teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met the chair, vice-chair and three other members of the governing body, including a parent governor. He also met with one of the local authority's school improvement advisers. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons about their work and progress.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents and carers to seek their views about the school. The lead inspector also considered the 12 responses from parents who completed the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of parents who sent their comments to the West Midlands Ofsted regional office by text or email. All responses from parents were considered and analysed.
- Inspectors spoke to nearly all teaching staff, including newly qualified teachers, to provide feedback on lessons observed and to seek their views about the way they are supported. Inspectors also considered the views of 18 members of staff who completed the online inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Charalambos Loizou, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Su Plant	Ofsted Inspector
Justine Lomas	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Whitcombe	Ofsted Inspector
Benetia Mounsey	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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