

Sundon Park Junior School

Kinross Crescent, Luton LU3 3JU

Inspection dates

9–10 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress is not accelerating quickly enough across all classes because teaching is not consistently good. This usually happens when work is either too easy or staff readily accept work of insufficient quality.
- Subject leadership, in subjects other than English and mathematics, is at an early stage of development. This means that the quality of work is not consistently high. Not enough pupils make more than expected progress across subjects.
- The effectiveness of communication with parents and carers is mixed. A small minority of parents don't feel well informed about their children's progress. They also think that poor behaviour is not always dealt with effectively.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make no better progress than expected from their individual starting points. Their overall attendance is not good enough.
- Several projects, such as initiatives to improve writing, are fairly recent and standards against national expectations are still low.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving because, since requiring special measures, leaders have worked relentlessly to identify the right priorities and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The governors, under the new leadership of a highly knowledgeable Chair, play a significant part in driving the school forward. They do not shy away from holding the school to account.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They love the many opportunities they have to join in sport, cultural and charitable activities. These contribute to their good behaviour and personal development.
- Pupils are working hard in English and mathematics and are improving quickly as a result. The leadership of these subjects is good.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - weaker teaching is eradicated and more teaching matches that of the best
 - progress is accelerated so that outcomes reach the national expectations across subjects and the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress increases
 - pupils who have special educational needs or disability make rapid progress
 - high standards are insisted upon across subjects of the curriculum.

- Improve the skills of subject leaders, in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that:
 - monitoring activities focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - the effective provision for most-able pupils in English and mathematics is now applied across other subjects
 - the report to governors keeps them well informed of pupils' progress and achievement in all subjects.

- Work even more closely with families, particularly to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Following the judgement that the school required special measures, the headteacher, the governing body and the local authority took immediate action to address inadequacies in leadership, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The two monitoring visits, in May 2015 and September 2015, confirmed that effective action was being taken to improve the school. More remains to be done, however, for Sundon Park to become a good school.
- Because the school was in special measures, senior leaders rightly targeted their efforts towards eradicating inadequate teaching and improving key aspects of provision, such as the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make in words), reading and writing as well as mathematics. In these subjects, they check the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in great detail and outcomes are improving. The work of subject leaders, however, is underdeveloped. The lower than expected level of work in a few subjects, particularly for most-able pupils, is not challenged enough. Checks are required to ensure that achievement in other subjects matches that of the best and that robust findings are reported to governors.
- Over the past year, changes to leaders' areas of responsibilities and difficulties in recruiting teachers slowed improvement. As a result of staff changes, a small minority of parents and carers do not feel well informed about their children's progress or know what support their children are receiving if they are falling behind. In contrast, other parents and carers told inspectors at the beginning of the school day, through the questionnaire and individual texts that the school was much improved. Communicating with families, particularly those who find it hard to engage in school life, requires further work. The school is now well placed to consolidate links with families and the recently obtained 'Families First' Award is celebrating the success of governors and staff in this aspect of the school's work.
- The local authority frequently reviews the school's progress and standards. Targeted support to improve teachers' subject knowledge and planning in English and mathematics is successful. The school now has the capacity to sustain its own improvement because senior leaders and teachers are benefiting from the expertise of local effective practitioners. Two headteachers in particular, one of whom is headteacher of an outstanding school and a national leader of education, are adamant that the school is improving rapidly. These partnerships and networks played a part in ensuring that the school no longer required special measures and are key to making the school even better.
- The headteacher and her senior leadership team are determined to put things right and committed to ensuring that the school serves its local community well. There continues to be a strong sense of urgency to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good. The deputy headteacher is now more confident and leading her areas of responsibility well. The new coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs or disability must accelerate the rate of progress for these pupils because the achievement gap with other pupils in the school is not closing quickly enough.
- The systems in place to manage the performance of teachers and plan further training are rigorous. The frequent pupils' progress meetings are used to evaluate the quality of staff's work and hold them to account for the quality of teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour.
- The curriculum motivates pupils who told inspectors that learning was enjoyable and interesting. The emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics ensure that pupils, by the end of Year 6, have a better understanding of the key skills they need to succeed when they move to their secondary schools. Senior leaders are aware of the need to develop the curriculum for design technology and science. Pupils said that they like 'mixing and making things' and would like to do this more often.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils proudly explain how the values of the school are helping them in their behaviour and their learning. Pupils develop a global perspective on moral and cultural issues because of the good range of extra-curricular activities and resources which are available to them. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on rights, responsibilities and the principles behind modern British values. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good and they are well prepared for their future lives in Britain.
- Leaders and governors use the additional funding for sports and physical education effectively. Pupils love the subject and staff ensure that pupils receive expert coaching in a range of competitive and collective sports. Participation is increasing with over 200 pupils doing a club or a sporting activity outside the school day. Pupils are particularly proud to receive awards in assembly.
- The use of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils was reviewed in October 2015 and action taken to improve pupils' achievement. Senior leaders and governors check the progress of these pupils

very well. The progress meetings are particularly instrumental in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, because additional interventions to improve learning are clearly identified. As a result, gaps between this group of pupils and others in the school are closing. Further monitoring is required to ensure that the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is making a real difference to their achievement and attendance.

■ **The governance of the school**

- Significant improvements have been achieved under the leadership of the knowledgeable and highly committed Chair of the Governing Body. The review of governance that took place after the January 2015 inspection guided improvement and governance is now effective.
- Governors check the work of the school through frequent visits. Most of these are specifically linked to key priorities of the school improvement plan and actions identified by the School Improvement Group chaired by the local authority. These frequent checks, alongside the more formal work of the governing body, provide a strong, effective structure which governors use to hold leaders closely to account.
- Governors question the school's leaders effectively because they understand performance information about pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics. They ensure that funding is spent wisely and that teachers' pay progression depends on how effective they are in helping pupils make good progress. Governors require more information on standards and achievement across the full range of subjects.
- Governors ensure that their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding are met. They keep their own training under review so that they continue to be well informed of any safeguarding issues.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The staff understand the school's procedures and policies and ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils say that they feel safe when they are at school. Senior leaders are highly visible around the school. Pupils know that any concerns they have will be addressed promptly, although parents and carers are less convinced. Further work with families is required to explain action taken when issues arise and to improve communication. All staff have had relevant safeguarding training. The safeguarding designated officer knows families very well and, under the supervision of the headteacher, he ensures that those in need of intensive support are helped at times of crisis.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because staff are receiving helpful advice and are reflecting on their practice. Teaching is not yet good because staff turnover has affected continuity in learning over the past year; some teachers are new to their class and some require further help to ensure that pupils succeed academically.
- Some activities and strategies are not informed sufficiently by pupils' individual learning needs, plans or targets. This limits the challenge for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Teachers need to take immediate action to spot when pupils should attempt more demanding work.
- The teaching of pupils who are most able, including those who are disadvantaged, is receiving particular attention under the effective leadership of the deputy headteacher. Where teaching is creative and time is given for pupils to think for themselves and investigate how best to express their ideas, good learning is clearly visible and the most-able pupils thrive. This year, work in English books shows that most-able pupils use more sophisticated language and, in mathematics, they have a more secure grasp of complex problems. The World War 2 topic in Year 5 is a good example of teaching being effective in stretching pupils' imagination and developing their vocabulary. These high expectations, however, are not sustained across subjects. For Sundon Park to become a good school, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress must increase.
- Teachers are applying the school's assessment policy and are reviewing pupils' work to check that it is correct. Pupils usually read teachers' comments and try to improve, for example, their spelling and calculations. Staff are moderating their assessment jointly with local schools to ensure that it is accurate. More needs to be done to improve learning in classes where progress is too slow against national expectations and across subjects.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is given special attention. Pupils learn better in these subjects. They are confident and proud to show their reading logs to the inspectors, often checked by parents and carers. Initiatives, such as a parents' and carers' writing workshop, the expert coaching of teachers from other schools and the training led by local authority advisers, are helping to improve the subject knowledge of all staff.

- Learning support assistants are highly committed and provide much-needed welfare support to ensure that pupils who have gaps in their learning progress well. Leaders are currently checking that the balance is just right between in-class support and additional support outside the classroom. This is necessary to ensure that all pupils are given equal opportunity to access the full content of the curriculum and to develop their confidence and social skills when learning as part of a large group.
- Teaching and learning are good in several subjects including personal, social and health education, music and physical education. These subjects broaden pupils' knowledge, improve their general well-being and develop their self-esteem.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal development is not outstanding because, although pupils respond well to effective teaching and show interest, they rarely ask questions to further their understanding. In addition, pupils who have special educational needs or disability rely heavily on the support of additional adults.
- Pupils say that the school is 'much better this year'. They enjoy working hard and trying their best. They are learning well in English and mathematics because their confidence is increasing and they are prepared to have a go. Most-able pupils are particularly well behaved, even when teaching is less demanding than it could be. It was a pleasure to listen to the rehearsal of the school's choir because pupils were totally absorbed in the singing and were overjoyed at the prospect of performing to a large audience.
- Pupils feel safe and are well cared for. Staff have received relevant safeguarding training and follow correct procedures in response to concerns they may have about individual pupils. Pupils were observed behaving very safely. They understand how to stay safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils respect the views of others. They have a good understanding of the school's values and pupils of all backgrounds get on well together. The oldest pupils like to volunteer for jobs. Members of the School Council, in particular, enjoy the responsibilities that they are given. The few pupils who speak little English make friends very quickly. They are listened to and praised by the teachers when they do well.
- Displays around the school show pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example in learning about different faiths and taking part in charity events. Their role as good citizens is well evidenced as they join their parents, such as during the visit of the Mayor of Luton, to raise money for the school and get involved in the local community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a calm and orderly environment. On the playground, pupils are well supervised and play together sensibly. Pupils know the school's routines and are clear about what is expected of them. They respond well to instructions. The rare fixed-term exclusions are used as a last resort and are appropriate to ensure the protection and safety of pupils and staff.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying. Incidents are recorded carefully. Pupils say that they can seek help from the 'anti-bullying buddy' if they are worried and have no hesitation telling an adult when they need help. The small number of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire or sent additional comments to the inspectors are concerned about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors found that incidents are thoroughly investigated and bullying is not tolerated. The school must do even more to listen to families, particularly those who feel that behaviour is not managed well.
- Pupils want to attend school. Attendance is broadly average, but the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below that of all pupils in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes are not yet good. The school's own performance information shows that the proportion of pupils below age-related expectation is still too high in some classes. Historically, progress based on the Key Stage 1 results was not rapid enough. Current Year 3 staff are successful at ensuring smooth transition from the lower school to Sundon Park. The 'Rock Star Maths' is a fun way of learning the time

tables and pupils say they 'love it'. More rapid progress and better outcomes are required in Year 4. Staff in Year 5 are working well as a team to ensure that staffing issues do not affect pupils' progress. Current pupils are progressing well against their prior achievement at the end of Year 2.

- The 2015 results in the national tests confirmed the findings of the January 2015 inspection report. At that time, standards were too low, particularly in mathematics, grammar, spelling and reading. Current pupils are making better progress and, although changes to the assessment process make comparisons difficult, predictions for the 2016 results for the current Year 6 show improvement. Strategies to address weaknesses in teaching during the past year have improved the rate of progress in English and mathematics and gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing.
- Improving outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics and for pupils who have special educational needs or disability requires consolidation. Pupil progress meetings are used well to identify gaps in learning but there is scope to make these challenging meetings even more effective. For example, clearer targets for most-able pupils should be set so that they make better than average progress in a broader range of subjects.
- In mathematics and English, outcomes are improving as a result of ongoing staff training. Scrutiny of books shows that teachers check the work carefully and pupils' outcomes are better as a result in these two subjects. The use of subject-specific vocabulary and accurate spellings are insisted upon. Pupils enjoy reading and writing. Opportunities to read in class, the use of rewards and reading logs are encouraging pupils to read for pleasure and helping to raise standards.
- Outcomes in the current Year 6 are improving and pupils are coping with more difficult work. They are better prepared for their secondary education than pupils who left the school in July 2015. The parents who wrote or spoke to the inspectors said that teachers are working hard but they are not sure whether Year 6 results are good enough. Pupils are practising their skills at school and at home. Formal tests give them confidence and experience of the standards expected. Inspectors saw some good work in the Year 6 books where, for example, pupils expressed the mood of their story carefully based on the reading of *The Middle of Nowhere* or used dictionaries to refine the way they persuaded an audience through their writing.

School details

Unique reference number	109555
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10004520

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	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Bendefy
Headteacher	Jennifer Wightman
Telephone number	01582 571619
Website	www.sundonpark.luton.sch.uk
Email address	school@sundonpark.luton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 January 2015

Information about this school

- Sundon Park is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of White British pupils is 49.5%. About half come from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than the average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- Since the previous inspection the leadership team has been strengthened with the appointment of a deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. A new special educational needs coordinator leads the inclusion team. The Chair of the Governing Body is also new.
- The school was placed in special measures in January 2015. Monitoring inspections took place in May 2015 and September 2015.
- The school works in collaboration with and receives the support of Cheynes Infant School, Tennyson Road Primary School and Lealands High School. The headteacher of Tennyson Road Primary School is a national leader of education.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classrooms. Senior leaders took part in joint observations with inspectors and attended all inspection team meetings.
- Observations were made of pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the day, at lunchtimes, breaktimes and when they were moving around the school. Pupils' behaviour was also observed in the classroom. Inspectors spoke informally with pupils in the playground and the dinner hall.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors, school leaders and the inclusion team.
- The lead inspector met the school's local authority senior adviser and had telephone conversations with the headteachers from two local schools who share their expertise with staff at Sundon Park.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at work in pupils' books and on display. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its improvement plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of 28 staff questionnaires and 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). The lead inspector also took account of 31 texts sent by parents and carers. An evaluation of the school's own questionnaire to parents was also considered.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the day and listened to the choir rehearsal after school.

Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Dr Matthew Rayner

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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