

# Southwood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110363
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	356725
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alison Grainger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	172
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dawn Reid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Bryan Schram
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Bryony Place Conniburrow, Milton Keynes MK14 7AR
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by a total of nine teachers and scrutinised pupils' written work. They met with staff with leadership and management responsibilities, governors and pupils. An inspector spoke informally with parents at the end of a school day. Documentation was examined, including school improvement plans and the records kept on pupils' progress. Account was taken of the 45 parental questionnaires received.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching in meeting the needs of all ability groups of pupils and those of pupils with English as an additional language.
- The contribution of the curriculum to the development of pupils' skills, particularly in writing.
- The effectiveness of action to improve attendance.
- How successfully leaders and managers evaluate teaching and take the right action for improvement.

## Information about the school

Pupils attending this school are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being of White British and Black African heritage. Almost two-fifths of pupils speak English as an additional language, although few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Throughout the school, pupils are taught in ability sets for English and mathematics and in mixed-ability classes for other subjects.

The school has a variety of awards for aspects of its work, including Healthy Schools bronze and Eco Schools silver awards gained in 2010. It is federated with a nearby infant school. A private nursery operates on the school's site. The infant school and nursery were not part of this inspection.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Southwood School provides pupils with a satisfactory education. It does some things well. In particular, good care and support for pupils ensure that they develop into mature and sensible young people who relate positively to others. Behaviour is good and the school is racially harmonious. Pupils are keenly aware of their duty to care for others and for the environment, reflecting the school's achievement of the Eco Schools silver award. They are actively involved in the local community and in helping those less fortunate than themselves, such as through links with a local retirement village and many activities to raise funds for charities. Strong links with parents, carers and outside agencies add to the effective promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being.

Pupils make satisfactory progress. There are occasions when progress picks up a bit, and other times when it slows a little, reflecting inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Generally, teaching has a satisfactory impact on pupils' learning and progress. Some teaching is good, but there is not enough good teaching to raise attainment, which is a little below average.

Almost all lessons have a clear focus and many include interesting activities that engage and motivate pupils well, particularly in Year 6. There are several reasons why most teaching is satisfactory, rather than good. Teachers plan relevant activities but without giving sharp enough attention to the full range of pupils' learning needs. This means that expectations are not always high enough for all pupils, particularly the more able, and activities are not sufficiently varied for different ability groups. Some marking is thorough and moves learning on well. However, not all marking tells pupils clearly what they have done well and what they need to improve. When developmental advice is given, teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on it.

Strengths in the curriculum include a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs. The school recognises that it is not giving full attention to the development and application of writing and mathematical skills across the subjects. Furthermore, there are not enough good opportunities for pupils to develop their competence in writing at length. This is particularly the case in Years 3 and 4 where progress in writing is slower.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and is demonstrating the necessary capacity to improve further. Strengths, such as in the care for pupils and the enrichment of the curriculum, have been maintained and built on. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those learning English as an additional language, has improved. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are now better at checking the school's effectiveness. They do more now to evaluate the impact of teaching and question teachers about pupils' progress. Nevertheless, shared accountability is not well enough established to drive a rapid pace of improvement in teaching.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that most promotes good learning and progress by December 2011, by:
  - ensuring that all teachers focus sharply on the next steps in learning for all ability groups when planning and delivering lessons
  - raising expectations of the standards that all pupils, particularly the more able, are capable of attaining
  - ensuring marking provides all pupils with clear feedback on what they are doing well, what they need to do to improve their performance, and making sure that pupils act on the guidance given.
- Provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their competence in writing at length in English and other subjects, and to develop and apply mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Increase the rigour of the way leaders and managers monitor teaching and hold all teachers to account for pupils' progress.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Most year groups enter the school with attainment a little below average. Pupils' satisfactory rate of progress maintains, rather than raises, their attainment. Learning is best when teaching is focused on the next steps in learning and pupils are clear about what they are aiming to achieve. This was consistently the case in lessons seen in Year 6. In English lessons in Year 6, pupils of all abilities were engaged well by activities based on the theme of Dr Who. Boys, girls and pupils with English as an additional language rose well to the challenges set in creating good quality similes and complex sentences. Pupils' enjoyment was clear, with much good-natured laughter from some of the pupils as they shared their work with each other. Pupils appreciate having their ideas valued and being actively involved in lessons. They engage readily in paired discussions. In a Year 4 lesson, they were sensible in their responses to a short drama activity that required them to briefly take on roles such as those of an owl or a unicorn!

Although pupils have good attitudes to learning, there are occasions in some lessons when their involvement slips because activities are not interesting or challenging enough. When this happens, the pace of learning slows and there is limited enjoyment. The learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and of those with English as an additional language, is no longer slower than that of other pupils in their classes. This improvement has resulted from pupils receiving the adult support they need to move on at the same pace as others. Pupils value the extra help they are given, particularly the support of the school's 'learning and achievement base', which does much to promote the learning of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and raises self-esteem.

Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, reflecting the school's achievement of the Healthy Schools award. They respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities to stay fit and healthy, including lessons led by sports coaches during the school day and the after-school sporting activities. Pupils really enjoy the many clubs and visits and recognise that these enrich their experiences. They feel safe at school and know that they have adults who will support them if they have any problems. Pupils know

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a good deal about how to stay safe outside school, such as when close to traffic or when using the internet. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures within the school and beyond.

The attendance rate is broadly average and improved this school year, following a slight dip during the last two years. Pupils' many good personal qualities, their attendance and rate of progress in developing basic skills, prepare them satisfactorily for their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

There are good features to teaching. All adults ensure that there is a supportive and caring atmosphere in lessons that is conducive to learning and good behaviour. Teachers explain the overall purpose of lessons clearly. In most lessons, time is used effectively, with activities building appropriately on each other. While support for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory, pupils move on at a good pace when they have intensive support provided by the school's specialist member of staff.

A variety of factors decrease the impact of teaching on learning. Teachers plan lessons that are broadly appropriate for the class or set as a whole and are clear about the overall focus and activities to be undertaken. There is not sharp enough attention, however, to what the different ability groups should achieve in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. This results in expectations not always being high enough, in

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particular for the more-able pupils within the class or set. There are examples of good marking, for instance, supporting and moving on understanding in mathematics for pupils with special educational needs in Year 5. Not all marking, however, contributes well enough to pupils' progress.

The school has rightly identified that it should give greater attention to the development of literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum. While learning is steadily promoted in most lessons, there are not many good opportunities for pupils to develop and apply mathematical skills in other subjects. A lack of high quality opportunities for pupils to write at length prevents those in Years 3 and 4, in particular, from making better progress. There are, however, some stimulating writing activities linked to other subjects in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Year 5, for example, wrote to Catherine Parr to persuade her to marry Henry VIII.

High quality care, guidance and support have been strengthened since the last inspection. Pastoral care is very good. Trust and respect permeate the school and the interactions of pupils and adults. The school is improving attendance, working closely with the educational welfare officer to tackle persistent absenteeism where it does not result from a justifiable reason, such as illness. It recognises, however, that further action is necessary to achieve good attendance. Partnerships with outside agencies and specialists contribute hugely to pupils' welfare.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher's leadership of the federated infant school was taking up too much time and preventing the monitoring of this school's work. This situation has been rectified and monitoring and evaluation procedures are better established than at the last inspection. Staff with leadership roles, such as those who are responsible for key subjects or teams of teachers, now have the time necessary to review pupils' progress. The evaluation of teaching in individual lessons is more accurate than it was. However, the evaluation of evidence of how teaching supports pupils' learning and progress day by day and how this accumulates over time is not used fully to hold individual teachers to account. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of instances of weak teaching having been challenged and not tolerated since the last inspection.

Governance is developing well and the Chair of the Governing Body is committed to helping the school to improve. The governing body is rigorous in ensuring the safety of pupils, and staff and have good systems in place to safeguard and protect pupils. Current government requirements for safeguarding are met well. Governors have started to ask

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challenging questions of leaders. They are currently developing their involvement in monitoring the school's effectiveness.

Community cohesion is promoted well. This is evident in the harmonious relationships within the school and the way in which the school reaches out to different groups in the local community. Through its links with other schools, it is effective in promoting understanding of cultural diversity more widely than within the school and Milton Keynes. The school is rigorous in ensuring that all pupils are fully involved in all aspects of school life. They go the extra mile to support pupils, who would otherwise find it difficult, to participate fully. However, the school is not yet ensuring that all pupils achieve well, rather than simply equally.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers making their views known through the questionnaire are pleased with the school. Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors endorsed this picture. They are very pleased with the quality of care for their children. Inspectors agree with these positive views and that pupils are kept safe.

While parents and carers consider teaching and pupils' progress good, inspectors found them to be satisfactory. There is some good teaching, but not enough. Leadership and management of the school are also satisfactory, rather than good, although inspectors found that the school's partnership with parents and carers is strong and gives good support to pupils.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southwood School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	58	19	42	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	53	21	47	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	44	23	51	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	33	28	62	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	40	27	60	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	42	25	56	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	36	28	62	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	31	30	67	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	31	28	62	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	44	22	49	2	4	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	31	31	69	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	53	21	47	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	47	24	53	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



17 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Southwood School, Milton Keynes MK14 7AR**

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you. You helped to make us feel welcome. We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education.

You told us how much you value the support and care that the adults provide. You especially praised the learning and achievement base (LAB) and the help it provides if you have any problems. We agree that you are well looked after and that the adults keep you safe. We saw that you behave well and that everyone gets on well together. You are right to be proud that bullying does not happen in your school and that, if it ever did, the adults would not tolerate it. You are also right to be proud of the way you help others, such as by raising funds for charities.

You make satisfactory progress during your time at Southwood. This is because teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. There is some good teaching and we saw good learning in the Year 6 lessons we visited. There are also some good features to the curriculum that help you to stay fit and healthy and that contribute hugely to your personal development. We have asked the adults to do the following now so that your progress increases and becomes good:

- Ensure that all the teaching is good and at the right level to challenge each of you. We have said that teachers' marking should do more to help you to improve, as it is too variable in doing this at the moment.
- Give you more good opportunities to develop your skills in writing at length and to use and apply your mathematical skills in different subjects.
- Speed up the pace at which the school is improving teaching.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger

Lead inspector

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