

Swalecliffe Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118558
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358380
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanna Toulson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maisie Blight
Headteacher	Tammy Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons taught by 21 teachers, observed an assembly and held meetings with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, a range of policies and risk assessments, data relating to pupils' progress and attainment, documentation relating to safeguarding, lesson plans and pupils' work. The questionnaires returned by 109 pupils, 40 staff and 148 parents and carers were scrutinised.

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

- How effectively the school tackles the fluctuations in progress that pupils make.
- How well the school is closing the attainment gap between vulnerable groups.
- How well leaders at all levels drive school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. Most of these difficulties relate to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, speech and language difficulties or moderate learning needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly below average. The headteacher was appointed in January 2010. The school has the Activemark, the Healthy Schools Award, the National ICT Mark and an Eco Bronze Award. The children's centre on site is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate 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

2

Main findings

Swalecliffe Community Primary School is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly. There are many good features to its work. The Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children are well prepared for the next stage in their school life. The school provides good care for all its pupils and there is a very positive atmosphere in which pupils feel safe. Adults provide excellent role models and there are good relationships across the school. As a result, behaviour is good and pupils are polite, friendly and kind to each other.

The headteacher provides good direction and has the confidence and respect of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and pupils. The quality of learning and the progress that pupils make are satisfactory and there is good evidence of improvement, due to the commitment and drive of leaders at all levels. Those parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the headteacher and the school. Typical comments were: 'Many positive changes have been made under the new head' and 'Our child thoroughly enjoys school'. The recently restructured leadership team has already improved the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 2, 5 and 6. This has resulted in improved attainment in Year 6 and has halted the decline in attainment at the end of Year 2. Attendance has improved and is now high. The determination of all staff to continue to improve is reflected in very sharply focused action plans which arise from rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. The governing body provides good support and challenge to the school. All this demonstrates that there is a good capacity to continue to improve.

Teachers have created bright learning environments with high-quality displays of pupils' work. In the best lessons, the learning intention is clear and pupils are appropriately challenged. However, in some lessons, work is not always well matched to the needs of individuals. For example, more-able pupils are sometimes given work that is too easy and opportunities are lost to challenge them through effective questioning. Pupils who find learning more difficult are sometimes given work that is too easy or too hard and although support staff usually provide good support, on a few occasions this is not consistent and so pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory rather than good progress overall. Marking of pupils' work is not consistently good throughout the school and pupils have too few opportunities to assess their own work or that of others.

The curriculum is good and supports the development of good personal development and well-being by providing imaginative cross-curricular activities which engage and excite pupils. Pupils have an outstanding understanding about how to keep healthy. Good opportunities are taken to promote this understanding through the curriculum. For example, during the inspection pupils in Year 4 made good use of computers to record their ideas about how healthy the class was.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all teaching secures good or better progress by ensuring that:
 - assessment is used well to match work to the needs of individuals and to provide appropriate levels of challenge
 - marking consistently gives pupils clear guidance about how to move their learning on
 - pupils are given more opportunities to assess their own learning
 - adult support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is consistently good.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children join the school with levels of skills and knowledge that are at or below those expected and with especially low levels of communication, language and literacy skills. Attainment at the end of Year 6 had been average since 2007 but rose significantly in 2010. The school's own data, as well as pupils' work, show that Year 6 pupils are on track to reach challenging but realistic targets and hence similar above average levels of attainment this year. For these Year 6 pupils, this is good progress and provides evidence that outcomes, although currently satisfactory, are improving strongly. Outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactory with signs of improvement. During the inspection, good learning was seen where teachers used assessment well to ensure individual pupils were challenged. For example, in Year 6, pupils were excited about creating metaphors and were encouraged to 'up-level' their sentences by using more ambitious vocabulary. In Year 2, pupils made good progress in their ability to use adjectives when writing about their space character. On occasions, for example in Year 1, where pupils could move between classes to choose from the range of activities on offer, too little direct teaching meant that although pupils enjoyed the activities, they lost opportunities to learn.

The school has recently been awarded 'outstanding' in its Healthy Schools award and the inspection echoes this view that pupils have an excellent understanding about how to keep healthy. Pupils contribute well to the community, through, for example, being play leaders and raising money for charity. They care about their environment and are proud to have achieved an 'Eco' award which recognises their good work on recycling. Very successful strategies have resulted in high attendance. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils develop good spiritual, social and moral understanding through, for example, assemblies which explore the concept of trust. Several links with contrasting schools, including a long standing link with a school in France, support pupils' good cultural development.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

Teaching is satisfactory overall but improving strongly. Where teaching is good, work is well matched to the needs of all pupils because teachers use assessment well. Pupils have opportunities to talk about their learning with their partner or in small groups and are encouraged to extend their ideas through effective questioning. Where teaching is less effective, assessment is not well used and there is too little difference between what is expected of different ability groups. There is sometimes an overemphasis on the 'hands up' strategy which means that opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas are lost.

Visits to local places of interest, for example Dover and a local zoo, together with opportunities such as learning African drumming in Year 5, contribute to a good curriculum which provides pupils with a broad range of imaginative experiences and is having increasingly positive effects on pupils' progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is very well used to enhance pupils' learning and the school has received the National ICT mark in recognition of this good provision. 'Life Skill Challenges' provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum and are much enjoyed. As a pupil said, 'they help me learn the skills I need to solve problems'. This good curriculum contributes well to the improving attainment of pupils.

The school provides a very welcoming environment. There is evident care by the staff towards the pupils which is enhanced by a range of effective partnerships with outside agencies and parents and carers. The good support for potentially vulnerable pupils,

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through, for example, the family learning teacher, impacts positively on the emotional well-being and personal development of pupils. Transition arrangements are very good and this helps pupils feel confident about the next stage of their education. Nurture groups provide good support for vulnerable pupils whose well-being is regularly monitored through vulnerable pupil meetings which involve senior leaders.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school judges accurately that learning and progress are satisfactory. Leaders are united in a common sense of purpose that is focused on improving the quality of teaching which is improving as teachers observe and support each other and learn from the best practice. Senior leaders, responsible for their allocated year groups, and middle leaders, responsible for key subject areas, drive improvement well across the school. This is why outcomes for pupils are improving so strongly. Good systems are in place to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The '360 degree' monitoring, three times a year, informs actions taken to continue to improve. The governing body knows the school well and is influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. It is rigorous in ensuring that good systems are in place to keep pupils and staff safe. Issues about safety are integrated well into the curriculum, for example through the teaching of e-safety.

Following an analysis of its context, the school has been successful in implementing a range of initiatives to promote community cohesion. The school is a very cohesive community and parents and carers are encouraged to take part in school life. For example, the 'Men love to Learn' project involves male parents and carers taking part in activities, such as making a Greek trireme or taking part in a 'Pirate Treasure Hunt'. Parents and carers value the positive relationships which the headteacher and the governing body have developed. As a parent wrote in the questionnaire, 'There is now an active and positive dialogue with parents.' The school regularly asks for their views, for example in the recent consultation about end-of-year reports for pupils. Information sessions about how literacy and mathematics are taught in school help parents and carers support their children's learning.

The school gathers good information about the participation of groups of pupils in school life in order that it can tackle discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. It does so satisfactorily and recognises the need to improve the performance of all pupils and especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and this has meant that provision has remained good, despite several changes of staff. Children settle quickly into Reception because staff visit children at home as well as in their pre-school setting. Adults know the children well and make careful and accurate assessments of their learning. Children choose from a range of activities which engage and sustain their interest. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed writing about minibeasts and making a picnic for them. Good questioning from the adults meant that they both asked and answered questions about what they were doing. Planning for the use of the outside area is good and it is used well to develop children's skills. For example, children were playing 'ice-cream parlours' outside and talking about the flavours and developing early writing skills by making menus. Children feel very safe and happy in this caring environment. They make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 they have developed skills which are above the national average, especially in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and personal, social and emotional development, although lower in communication, language and literacy. Parents and carers appreciate the work of the staff, as summed up by a parent who said, 'I'm very happy. My son settled really quickly, thanks to the staff.'

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a below average response rate to the parent and carer questionnaire but the overwhelming majority of those who responded support the school and say they are happy with their child's experience. A few parents and carers wrote specifically about the positive impact of the new headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swalecliffe Community Primary 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 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 640 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	66	46	31	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	110	74	35	24	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	58	39	83	4	3	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	45	68	46	11	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	81	55	59	40	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	85	58	51	34	10	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	53	63	43	4	3	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)	53	36	76	51	8	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	68	46	70	47	7	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	36	77	52	9	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	41	75	51	8	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	92	62	54	36	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	59	55	37	4	3	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



19 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swalecliffe Community Primary School, Whitstable CT5 2PH

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. The other inspectors and I really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you working so well in your lessons. You told us that you enjoyed school and were proud of it. We thought you were well behaved and it was lovely to see how kind and respectful you are to each other. All the staff care a great deal about how well you are doing and how happy you are. You know how to keep yourself safe and you have an excellent understanding about how to keep healthy. You attend school regularly and arrive on time. We think that Swalecliffe is a satisfactory school and to make it even better, we have asked your teachers to:

- make teaching even better by:
- making sure that your work challenges you to think and work hard
- making sure that when teachers mark your work, they give you clear guidance about how to improve it
- giving you more opportunities to assess your own learning
- making sure adults working with you and your teacher always give pupils good support.

You can help by always working hard and telling your teacher if the work is too easy or too difficult for you. We wish you every success for the future.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer term.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Toulson

Lead inspector

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