

Swaffham CofE VC Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number121089Local AuthorityNorfolkInspection number358924

Inspection dates16–17 June 2011Reporting inspectorNichola Perry

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

Type of school Junior

School category Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils 7-11

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 162

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Mike Ward

HeadteacherTracey McCarthyDate of previous school inspection9 March 2009School addressBrandon RoadSwaffham

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Seven teachers were observed in 20 lessons. One assembly was observed and four break and lunchtimes were also observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, subject leaders, the special educational needs leader, the designated person responsible for managing the single central record, other staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books and displays, and at documentation, including the school development plan, assessments, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning and safeguarding and welfare arrangements. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers, and scrutinised 70 parents' and carers' questionnaires, 20 staff questionnaires and 145 pupils' questionnaires.

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

- Are teachers' expectations of what pupils can do in each year group sufficiently high and consistent across the school so that learning is accelerated and pupils make better than expected progress year on year?
- Is the wide range of assessment information understood by all staff and used as well as it can be so that learning is well focused on pupils' different needs?
- How effective is the school's work on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of life in the wider world, beyond that in their local community?

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average junior school, comprises six classes from Years 3 to 6. Years 3 and 4 are taught in three single-age classes and there are three mixed-age classes in Years 5 and 6, the latter being taught in ability sets for English and mathematics. The school population is generally stable. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs are significantly higher than those found nationally. The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. There is a much lower-than-average proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language.

The school has experienced significant staffing turbulence since the previous inspection. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2010.

The school shares the site with the feeder high school and local leisure centre. Breakfast and after-school clubs are provided by the junior school. The school has been awarded Active Sportsmark, Healthy Schools Status and the International School Award at Foundation and Intermediate levels.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Swaffham Junior School is a good school. It is a happy, friendly and purposeful place of learning. The headteacher provides very effective leadership which has brought about significant improvement in outcomes for all pupils, including better progress and higher attainment. She is ably supported by the senior leadership team. Together with an effective governing body, she has ensured that the entire school community works as a cohesive team which strives to improve all aspects of pupils' personal development and their learning.

The good quality care, guidance and support provided for pupils and their families are strengths. Behaviour is good throughout the school and sometimes it is exemplary. Adults are very good role models in the way that they show great respect to all pupils. This contributes to the excellent relationships and the effective inclusion of pupils from different groups in all activities. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is a strength. Pupils feel safe and well cared for because they have confidence that their teachers and other adults will listen to them and take any action necessary to keep them safe. Pupils are confident, friendly and polite, and work well together. They play an outstanding and active role in the school and wider communities, for example, through the school council, the school captains, the energy busters team and the STEP badge winners. Through these groups, pupils develop strong social and moral awareness and values. They learn very well how to prioritise developments, make best use of a budget and manage difficult situations. Pupils show real thoughtfulness towards others who are different or who are less fortunate than themselves and contribute regularly to local and national charities of their choice. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of how to lead a healthy life, why it is necessary and their responsibility in this. For example, when meeting with the school catering staff, pupils requested 'lo' salt and ketchup. The school has won awards for its strong systems in this aspect of pupils' personal development. Pupils show good spirituality through the many opportunities they have for reflection, in their learning and in assemblies.

Good teaching overall, including some that is outstanding, encourages all groups of pupils to be positive learners. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Attainment has risen significantly because initiatives to improve pupils' skills have had a positive impact in all year groups and contributed well to improving rates of progress. For example, the school correctly identified the need to improve pupils' mental agility in mathematics. In this they have had some success, although pupils do not always practise or apply these skills in practical ways. In-class support also contributes to pupils' good learning. Overall, assessment is accurate and the good range of data is used well to monitor attainment and progress and to set challenging targets. However, progress is not even across the school because teachers' expectations are not consistently high. Teachers now ensure that objectives and activities are appropriate in all lessons. However, these are not sufficiently

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fine-tuned to pupils' different abilities, so that pupils are not always aware of what they have to do to make progress to the next level. Assessment information is not used enough to modify activities, and so increase the level of challenge, especially for

■ higher-attaining pupils. The good curriculum, which now places greater emphasis on developing pupils' skills, is much enjoyed by pupils, as is the wide range of additional activities provided both within school and in the wider community.

School leaders and governors have a secure and realistic understanding of the school's performance. This is because all aspects of self-evaluation are accurate and well founded on the needs of the school, with a strong focus on ongoing improvement. This has contributed to the better provision and improved outcomes for pupils. This, and the whole school community's commitment to getting better, demonstrates that the school is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and accelerate pupils' rate of progress by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, so that teachers'
 expectations are consistently high and take account of what pupils can already do
 - using assessment information more precisely to fine-tune activities, so they focus more closely on pupils' individual needs, and make learning consistently challenging for pupils in all groups, and particularly for more-able pupils.
- Improve levels of attainment in mathematics by:
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils to practise and apply their mathematical skills in more practical ways and in a range of contexts.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Learning was good or better in nearly all lessons observed. School data show that attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is broadly average. Pupils in all year groups are now making good progress, so that achievement is good. A legacy of significant underachievement in the past has been eliminated and, in 2010 for example, many pupils made extremely rapid progress to make up lost ground and achieve the standards they should for the first time in many years. Higher expectations, and in particular the accelerated learning in Year 6, have ensured that current Year 6 pupils have made equally rapid progress and are on target to reach at least similar levels. School assessment data and work in books indicate that pupils in Years 3 to 5 are making good progress and attaining at higher levels than these year-groups did in the past.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and have positive attitudes to learning because learning in most lessons is motivating, increasingly challenging and relevant to their experience. Where pupils are given opportunities to apply their basic skills in practical ways, both their enjoyment and their rate of progress are significantly accelerated because they can see the relevance of what they have learned. This was very much the case in an effective Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils learned very quickly why they needed to approach a problem-solving activity in a systematic way - while also thoroughly enjoying their learning. In an excellent English session, the detailed and comprehensive planning

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ensured that pupils made rapid progress in their understanding and use of 'power' words and 'imagery' in their writing.

Where the pace of learning is not as rapid as it needs to be, this is because planning is not precise enough about what pupils should learn, and does not use pupils' previous knowledge as the basis for providing challenging activities.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve at similar levels to other pupils. Individual needs are quickly identified and assessed and progress monitored very closely. Individuals and groups of pupils are well supported in lessons through appropriately differentiated activities which meet their identified needs. This, and a wide range of additional interventions, including one-to-one support, is having a positive impact so that pupils make good and sometimes very good progress. Effective additional support in lessons which ensures they have access to good learning, strongly contributes to pupils to achieving as well as they can. Effective induction arrangements and support ensure that pupils, including those who enter school part way through the year, settle quickly and learn well.

Pupils demonstrate good knowledge of other faiths and cultures. They show a good ability in reflecting on issues facing themselves and others and uphold values such as tolerance and kindness. Pupils participate willingly when taking on additional activities. They learn to express themselves confidently, for example, when attending the annual meeting between the school council and the governing body, showing visitors around the school or when conducting the annual pupil survey, including collating the results and feeding back to the senior leadership team. Pupils' well-developed personal skills and their average attainment in basic skills mean that they are being satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their learning. Pupils really enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sports clubs and the gardening club. The quality of singing is very good as is the the quality of artwork around the school, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of these subjects.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning		
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2	
Pupils' behaviour	2	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	
Taking into account:	3	
Pupils' attendance 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 good overall. This results in good achievement in all aspects of pupils' learning and development. There are examples of outstanding teaching in Year 6. Relationships are excellent so that learning takes place in a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere. Teaching focuses well on ensuring that pupils learn appropriate subject-specific language. Pupils are now expected to take greater responsibility for their own learning by using information readily available around the classroom so that they are developing their research skills and thinking for themselves, thereby becoming more independent learners.

Assessment is generally used well. In all lessons, planning is clear and outlines appropriate learning for pupils of all abilities. However, pupils are not always given clear criteria for success so that it is hard to involve them in a meaningful evaluation of how well they have done. This occasionally results in pupils, particularly those who are more able, not extending their learning at a sufficiently rapid rate. For example, where pupils are quickly able to achieve the objective, teachers do not always change the task to ensure greater challenge and more rapid progress at a higher level for these pupils. Questioning is good and focuses well on encouraging pupils to give extended answers and it is used effectively to assess understanding. Ongoing feedback in lessons is good and provides good motivation, support and challenge. Marking is positive and encouraging, but is inconsistent in helping pupils understand what they need to do next to improve their work.

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

The curriculum is effective and well enriched. It increasingly focuses on developing basic skills through a themed approach, which pupils rate highly. They speak excitedly about memorable learning opportunities such as making huge cut-out models of their favourite book characters during 'Aspirations week'. Outdoor learning is being developed well through use of the extensive school grounds and also the local and wider environment. Pupils very much enjoy it when their learning is of a practical nature, such as in science, music or art. French and German are taught to upper and lower school pupils respectively which helps them to embrace a wider European perspective. Personal, social and health education is very strong and taught across the whole curriculum as a running theme. This aspect of learning has made a considerable contribution to pupils' well-developed personal skills and strong personal values. Pupils have access to a wide range of additional activities. The breakfast and after-school clubs are well supported, the former providing a nutritious start to the day for pupils.

Pupils' pastoral care and support are strong. Wide-ranging work is undertaken with pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and their families, either in school or through the very good use of external support agencies. This ensures that no pupil is disadvantaged in any way. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of this aspect of the school and consider that their children enjoy school and are very safe and well-cared for. The school has had success in raising attendance for all but a few pupils. The strong partnership with parents and carers, the effective care and support and use of outside agencies have had a significant impact on reducing unnecessary absences year on year so that it is average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher and staff have created a happy and safe learning environment where pupils can thrive, regardless of their ability or background.

The strong leadership of the headteacher, high expectations of the staff and pupils and her very clear vision for the school have resulted in good improvement in a short space of time. The headteacher has successfully steered the school through an extremely difficult period without losing the focus on improvement. The entire school community is extremely successful in ensuring equal opportunities. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve their potential in all aspects of their social, emotional and academic development. Leadership skills are developing well and senior staff demonstrate a clear understanding of what has to be done to bring about further improvement. School plans provide clear quidance with realistic objectives and focused actions to bring about change. Regular and

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rigorous monitoring of teaching has led to a greater proportion of good and outstanding teaching and no inadequate teaching, so that pupils now experience good teaching for the majority of their lessons. Teaching continues to improve, although the school is very aware that not enough has been done yet to ensure that teaching is at least good in every lesson.

Governance is good. The governing body has developed its role and level of challenge under the guidance of a very effective Chair. Governors are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating processes and play a key part in strategic planning. Governors ensure all statutory requirements are fully compliant and that safeguarding, child protection and training needs are effectively met, to take account of best practice. The school puts all aspects of health and safety at the heart of its work with pupils and these aspects are effectively promoted throughout the curriculum. There is comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among pupils, staff and governors which results in a realistic and proportionate approach to safety and safeguarding and, in particular, child protection.

Much work has been done to develop pupils' very good understanding of the school, local and wider communities. The parent and community forums ensure that both groups have a clear voice within the school. Parents and carers are now very much more involved as partners in their children's learning, as noted by several parents and carers. Wherever possible their skills, as well as those of other members of the community, are used within school. For example parents and carers, local businesses and organisations take part in activities, such as 'Aspirations' week which promotes life skills for pupils. Strong links with local groups have been established, such as Family Action, which provides support for vulnerable pupils, including accessing a grant which enabled the breakfast club to be established. Pupils do a great deal by way of participating and helping in their local community and contact is already well-established with a school in Malawi, through strong links with the Church of England, as well as schools in Germany and France, through the town's twinning organisation. Although the school's contact with a contrasting area within the United Kingdom has failed to flourish, this by no means diminishes their understanding of national issues or of the the multi-cultural nature of the United Kingdom, due to the strong emphasis placed on this aspect of their learning through the curriculum.

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

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	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under a half of parents and carers returned a questionnaire. Those who returned questionnaires are highly satisfied with what the school provides for their children. They are unanimous that their children enjoy school and the overwhelming majority are extremely positive about all aspects of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swaffham CofE VC Junior 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements		ngly ree	Ag	ree	Disa	gree		ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	40	42	60	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	47	36	51	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	44	37	53	0	0	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	36	40	57	5	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	41	39	56	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	39	35	50	6	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	31	39	56	6	9	2	3
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)	24	34	38	54	6	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	33	45	64	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	36	36	51	5	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	30	43	61	5	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	41	39	56	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	44	36	51	2	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

	nent (percenta	ent (percentage of schools)		
Type of school	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 lea	arning,

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: 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.

■ 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.



20 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swaffham CofE VC Junior School, Swaffham, PE37 7EA

Thank you so much for helping the inspectors to find out all about your school and what you think of it. We really enjoyed our visit and came away agreeing with you that you go to a good school where everyone is happy and friendly, and that it is a nice place to go to every day. There are lots of good things about your school.

You are now making good progress in your learning because you are all trying very hard to do well.

Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and in some classes it is excellent.

Your parents and carers are really pleased with what the school provides for you and they get on very well with your headteacher and the teachers.

You know how to keep yourselves safe and understand that the adults care about you very much and work hard to make sure you are really safe.

Your headteacher and senior teachers have really good ideas about how to make your school even better and have worked very hard to achieve this.

We have asked your headteacher and the other teachers to do a few things which will help them make your school even better.

We would like your teachers to get even better at teaching you so that you all make much quicker progress and get even better results when you are assessed.

We want your teachers to use all the information they have to make sure they give you more challenging work.

We would like to see you doing more practical work in mathematics so that your work improves.

You can help by making sure you come to school every day and try your very best.

Yours sincerely

Nichola Perry

Lead inspector

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