

Swanbourne Church of England VA School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110451
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356747
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Saunders
Headteacher	Alexandra Owens
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2008
School address	Winslow Road Swanbourne Milton Keynes MK17 0SW
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons or part lessons were observed, taught by six different teachers. The inspectors also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings, planning documents, pupils' work and questionnaires returned from 58 pupils, nine staff and 29 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized junior school which is collaborating informally with two other schools and one pre-school, under one headteacher who is employed as substantive headteacher at Drayton Parslow Village School and is acting headteacher for Swanbourne School. There are separate governing bodies for each school, working in collaboration. Prior to September 2008 the school had taken pupils in the four to nine years age range. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that found nationally. They have a variety of needs ranging from general learning difficulties to behavioural and social and emotional needs. Staffing has been affected by long-term sick leave this year. The school has met the government's floor targets for academic performance for the one year that it has had a Year 6. The school gained the Healthy Schools award in 2009, the Buckingham Sports Partnership Small Schools award in 2010 and the Sing Up silver award in 2011.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	1

Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a good school which has benefitted considerably from the informal collaboration arrangements between local schools. In particular, it has resulted in more specialist teaching which has helped to raise standards.
- The warm welcoming, stimulating environment where pupils feel safe, secure and ready to learn is reflected in pupils' outstanding behaviour and above average attendance. Parents and carers appreciate this care and the large majority have positive views about the school.
- Pupils make good progress and attain above average standards. They are motivated and their work is interesting and enjoyable. They are very involved in their own learning because of the exciting curricular opportunities. Reading is a strength and is helped by the high level of support that parents and carers give their children.
- In mathematics, the lack of a consistent approach when teaching written calculation means that sometimes pupils become confused and progress slows. For a few less confident pupils, new learning in mathematics sometimes moves too quickly and when this happens their learning is insecure.
- Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. However, marking is better in literacy than in mathematics and not all teachers check that children are following up their previous comments to ensure that mistakes are not repeated.
- The headteacher and two senior leaders form a strong team. They have overseen the successful growth of the school from nine to 84 pupils and have maintained a good level of achievement during this time.
- Members of the governing body play a significant part in making important strategic decisions that drive the school forward.
- The concerted action to focus on improvement in order to raise standards, based on the school's clear and accurate review of its performance, demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By April 2012, improve teachers' marking by ensuring that:
 - teachers check that pupils follow up previous comments to ensure that mistakes are not repeated
 - marking in mathematics identifies more precise steps for improvement.
- By April 2012, improve achievement in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils are given time to consolidate their skills before moving on to new learning
 - there is a consistent approach to written calculation.

Main report

Pupils work and play harmoniously. They are adamant that they feel safe and say 'Teachers are really supportive and all the children are friendly.' They are consistently very well behaved, show high levels of engagement in lessons and involvement in their learning. They are extremely good at managing their own behaviour and are emphatic that they feel very safe and that there is no bullying. They are confident that if anything should ever occur, the school would deal with it quickly and successfully. The pupils' excellent awareness of spiritual, moral and social issues and respect for diversity are promoted well through assemblies, religious education and personal development lessons and are evident in the school's cohesive community. A good example of the high level of respect that exists was seen in a Year 5 literacy lesson, when one pupil proudly read out his work and other class members showed their appreciation. Pupils develop impressive social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. This, together with good standards in the key skills of English and mathematics, mean that pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their lives.

Pupils know they are making good progress and say they are learning as much as they can. One pupil said, 'I learn something new every lesson; I joined in Year 4 and now I am in Year 5 my levels have gone up loads.' Another pupil said, 'Everyone tries their best.' As this is a small school every cohort differs, but all have made good or better progress from their starting points. Although there has been some inadequate teaching in the past, which has led to some pupils making no progress, good teaching is now making sure that pupils are making good or better progress. Up until a year ago attainment in writing was lower than in reading. However, the introduction of 'Big Write' to pupils and parents and carers in September has opened up exciting opportunities for extended writing and improved spelling and punctuation. Weekly guided reading sessions, new resources and the high level of support that parents and carers give their children have helped reading to remain a strength. This year's Year 6 is on track to reach levels of attainment that are well above the national average. They read fluently and with expression because they have a good level of understanding of what they are reading. They can discuss the text confidently and give relevant points and examples as evidence of, for example, the author's use of language and purpose. One group reading Tales from India were keen to talk about

the moral at the end of each story. They said the book gave them an insight into the Indian way of life, but it also taught them important lessons for life such as the importance of not being greedy. They also drew parallels between one story and Romeo and Juliet, and between another and Chicken-Licken.

The school has recognised that in mathematics, the lack of a consistent approach when teaching written calculation methods means that sometimes pupils become confused and progress slows. A policy has already been agreed but has yet to be implemented. For a few less confident pupils, new learning in mathematics can sometimes move too quickly and when this happens, their learning is insecure. Good teaching in a small group for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has helped them to make good progress and narrow the gap between their performance and all pupils nationally. There is no discernable difference between the performance of boys and girls.

Teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations and are enthusiastic. As a result pupils are motivated and want to do well. Lessons are interesting. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding and use them effectively to scaffold pupils' learning. They know their pupils well and use assessment accurately so that learning is pitched at the right level. They use questions skilfully in order to get pupils to think about their learning and work things out for themselves. Learning is secure because it is well structured and there is a high level of pupil interaction and practical work.

For example, in a Year 6 numeracy lesson pupils confidently used the number facts that they already knew. They applied them in a variety of ways to develop their own strategies when consolidating divisibility. All pupils made good progress at their own level because there was a high degree of challenge; pupils had to think for themselves, but had ample opportunities to discuss their ideas in a group and cement their ideas.

In an outstanding literacy lesson, Year 5 pupils made exceptional progress because the teacher's constant checks moved their learning on at a fast pace and her high expectations helped pupils reconsider and improve their work. Marking is good; however teachers do not always check that pupils are following up their previous comments to ensure mistakes are not repeated. Marking in mathematics, while regular, does not identify next steps for improvement as precisely as in English. The teaching of reading is good and has improved with the increased emphasis on guided reading using new resources.

The headteacher's clear vision, passion for improvement and commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes are shared by the whole school community. Good communication is a key factor in ensuring that improvement is driven forward at a brisk pace. Staff are keen to take on new initiatives because they are confident that they have the backing and support of well-respected senior leaders. The school's well-planned actions based on accurate self-evaluation to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective. For example, the appointment of a teaching and learning manager, working across the three schools, has helped Swanbourne to identify and tackle weaknesses and this has improved the quality of teaching and

learning. The creation of a curriculum that is well matched to pupils' interests and their individual needs has ensured that pupils enjoy their learning and opened up opportunities such as pitching a new enterprise to the 'Dragon's Den'. New approaches to writing have motivated pupils and improved the quality of their work as they see the link between reading and writing. Pupils' comprehension skills have improved as a result of better resources for guided reading. The introduction of pupil target books has accelerated learning and appealed to pupils' competitive spirit as they strive to complete their targets and reach the next level. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have benefitted greatly from the organisation of a significant amount of dedicated time with a teacher whose skilful observations and questioning give a secure structure to their learning. These actions have successfully improved pupils' achievement and strengthened the quality of teaching and learning. Parents and carers have been quick to recognise this and the school's success is reflected in the rapid increase in pupil numbers. All of which goes to show that the school is well positioned to improve further.

The school's accurate tracking system highlights any underperformance. This, together with the school's outstanding care and guidance for all pupils, ensures that the school's provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is good. The school's performance is monitored and evaluated systematically and used carefully to make detailed and effective plans for improvement.

The governing body has an accurate understanding of what the school is trying to achieve and its strengths and weaknesses. Governors see that the model of leadership and management for this school has been successful. However, as the school has grown and become increasingly successful, members of the governing body judge that they have outgrown the current model of governance and have appropriate plans to simplify the structure in order to support the school further. Parents and carers and the wider community are actively engaged, well informed at all levels and have a good knowledge and understanding of the children's learning. Because the school is small the school knows its parents and carers well and matters can be dealt with quickly.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and ensure that all pupils feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are met. Some aspects of record keeping, such as the way that the fire drill is recorded, do not meet standards of best practice. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. The school is a cohesive community and pupils respect each other's differences, feel safe and behave well. Although the school has good plans in place, work to promote community cohesion beyond the school is less well developed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swanbourne Church of England VA 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 84 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	22	76	5	17	2	7	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	22	76	5	17	1	3	1	3
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	15	52	10	34	4	14	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	17	59	8	28	4	14	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	17	59	10	34	1	3	1	3
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	16	55	12	41	1	3	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	13	45	15	52	1	3	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	11	38	14	48	3	10	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	12	41	11	38	2	7	1	3
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	18	62	9	31	2	7	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	20	69	6	21	3	10	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	17	59	7	24	4	14	1	3

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 achievement of all pupils.■ Behaviour and safety.■ The quality of teaching.■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Swanbourne Church of England VA School, Swanbourne
MK17 0SW**

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You really helped us with our work. Your school gives you a good standard of education and there are a lot of things your school does well. You do particularly well with your reading and your writing has improved a lot this year.

You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. We found that everybody in school looks after you very well, especially those of you who have difficulties from time to time. We were impressed with your understanding and knowledge of your own learning and your desire to do even better! We could see that you behave very well, get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked them to do two things.

- They should make sure that when teachers mark your books they check to make sure you do not repeat your mistakes. They should also make sure that marking in mathematics is as helpful as marking in literacy.
- They should ensure that those of you who find mathematics difficult have time to make sure you fully understand new work before moving on. They should also make sure that you all use the same ways to write out your calculations.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson
Lead inspector

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