

Southwold County Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123089
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	359362
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Allen-Miles
Headteacher	Gemma Penny (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with the senior leadership team, other staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They also talked informally to parents attending the school's sports day. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school development plan, policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding of pupils and data about their progress. Inspectors also considered the views of pupils, staff and 58 parents and carers expressed in their responses to questionnaires.

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 and the school's curriculum in accelerating pupils' progress, particularly that of boys in Key Stage 2 and higher attainers throughout.
- The impact of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in enabling them to make satisfactory or better progress.
- The effectiveness of marking and assessment in helping pupils to improve their work.
- The extent of improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the impact on children's progress.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most of its kind. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Many of the needs of these children relate to moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems and, increasingly, autistic spectrum disorder. The school runs an after school club, The Sunshine Club, for which the governing body has just taken over responsibility. In March 2010 an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher were appointed because of the prolonged absence of the substantive headteacher. As the ongoing situation remained unclear until earlier this year, permanent appointments have yet to be made. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in January 2011. In Key Stage 2 the school is organised into three mixed-age classes in Years 3 and 4, with the same arrangement in Years 5 and 6. The school has gained a number of awards in including the Activemark and Healthy School status.

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

Southwold provides its pupils with a satisfactory education, as it did when it was last inspected. The acting headteacher and her acting deputy are steering the school effectively through a period of considerable uncertainty. They provide pupils with a very stimulating environment for learning and have ensured that the school's key strengths have been maintained and built upon. The school continues to look after its pupils well and arrangements for their safeguarding are robust. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and behave well. They enjoy their learning which is reflected in their above-average attendance. At the same time, accurate and realistic self-evaluation has identified areas of weaknesses, which have begun to be addressed. There have been some notable successes, for example in relation to the significant improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in increasing boys' progress in writing. This situation is recognised by many parents and carers, one commenting, 'I would like to commend the school for all the improvements over the last few years and how it has coped with the absence of a headteacher.' Nevertheless, other strategies to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress have not yet had time to be successful. Together with the continuing uncertainty over the long-term leadership of the school, this indicates satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

Children get off to a good start in the welcoming and vibrant Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly become eager and confident learners and make good progress. Thereafter, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall but variable from year to year. By the time pupils leave the school their attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average. Pupils' progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6 where the teaching is consistently strong. Whilst there is some strong teaching, elsewhere it is not yet consistent. Teachers plan interesting activities for pupils which engage them in their learning in most lessons. They work effectively with teaching assistants to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which enables them to make as much progress as their friends. However, in some lessons the most able pupils, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently and do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers assess pupils' progress well for the most part but do not always use this information to set challenging targets for improvement. Similarly, there are good examples of teachers' marking that helps pupils to improve their work, but this is not consistent throughout the school.

The acting headteacher has done much to distribute leadership more widely and senior leaders are playing an increasingly prominent role in monitoring and evaluating the school's provision. Curriculum leaders in literacy and numeracy are also knowledgeable and committed but their roles are underdeveloped and their knowledge and skills not fully utilised. New systems have been introduced for assessing and recording pupils' progress from term to term. This is enabling potential underachievement to be identified at an early

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stage and for additional support to be put in place where necessary. However, these systems are not yet reliable enough for leaders to be entirely confident that they reflect the progress of individuals and groups of pupils with complete accuracy. As a result of this and the continuing variability of teaching, discussions with teachers about pupils' progress are not yet resulting in demonstrably good progress in each year group.

Pupils really enjoy the many opportunities they have to take part in additional activities, visits and themed weeks, like the Sports Week which was taking place during the inspection. Activities such as these contribute to pupils' good understanding and take up of healthy lifestyles. Modern foreign languages and music are particular strengths which add considerably to pupils' experiences at school. Many pupils are proud of their school and willingly take on responsibilities. The school is a harmonious community and pupils get on well together. The school also offers pupils a wide range of experiences which contribute to their good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Up to 40% of school's whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good with an increasing proportion of lessons judged outstanding by July 2012
 - consistently challenging the more-able pupils to achieve as well as they can
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and target setting consistently help pupils to improve their work.
- Develop the skills of leaders at all levels by:
 - embedding systems to track pupils' progress to ensure that they accurately reflect the progress of individuals and groups
 - using tracking information to ensure that all pupils make good progress from year to year
 - clarifying the roles of the senior leadership team and curriculum leaders so that they all play their part in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory from their starting points. Their enjoyment of their learning is evident in most lessons where pupils apply themselves willingly, are keen to contribute their ideas and respond thoughtfully to their teachers' questions. They cooperate well in pairs and groups for the most part and enjoy applying their learning to practical situations, for example when pupils in the Year 5/6 classes were using their knowledge of circumference and radius to wrap containers for 'Doctor Who's food store'. In English, a focus on topics which are particularly targeted to interest boys has helped to accelerate their progress in writing. For example, in a lesson in Year 3/4, all pupils, and especially the boys, really enjoyed writing letters offering to host an Olympic event. Boys are still not doing as well as girls in general but the gaps are closing. Not all lessons are as

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engaging and pupils' interest wanes when pupils are asked to sit for too long without active participation. Also, more-able pupils do not make as much progress as they might when they have to sit through lengthy introductions and when follow up tasks do not demand enough of them. This illustrates why pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and relatively few reach the higher National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties receive good support and many become confident learners. This was evident in a lower set mathematics lesson in Year 5/6 when these pupils made rapid progress in applying their knowledge of coordinates in a range of situations. Those with autistic spectrum disorder respond well to the clear structures that are put in place for them. Some pupils present challenging behaviour from time to time but they are supported well and enabled to engage fully in learning with minimum disruption to others.

Pupils' good behaviour was demonstrated in lessons, as the pupils moved around the school and at sports day. Together with positive attitudes to learning, this is making a strong contribution to their improving progress in many classes. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school because they have confidence in the adults around to sort out any difficulties they may have. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities, reflecting the impact of the school's national awards. They are confident that their views are listened to, for example through the school council. They also contribute to the local and wider communities, for instance through their links with a local home for the elderly and their involvement in a range of charitable enterprises.

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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	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
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

The school's creative curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to write in different contexts and to see how different aspects of their learning fit together. This is helping to improve writing in the school, particularly for boys. Teachers plan together well to provide interesting and memorable experiences for pupils. This is often linked to visits to help them see the relevance of their learning, for example when Year 5/6 visited Bletchley Park in relation to their work on the Second World War. The link was also made to modern foreign languages with pupils assuming the role of Resistance members in France. Indeed the specialist teaching in modern foreign languages is a strength, enabling pupils to learn French and German as well as experiencing other European languages. Similarly, specialist teaching in music contributes to the high profile of music in the school and enabling pupils to perform in the choir and orchestra.

Teachers generally plan well to meet the wide range of needs in their classes. They use a wide range of resources, including information and communication technology, to engage and motivate learners. Setting by ability in mathematics is having a beneficial effect on catering for the different abilities, particularly in Key Stage 2 where pupils are in mixed-age classes. Nevertheless, more-able pupils are not always challenged to develop their own ideas and solutions because expectations are sometimes not high enough. Some pupils are clear about their targets and how they help them to improve, but this is not the

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case in all classes. Whilst most marking is supportive it varies in the extent to which it points to improvement.

The good care and guidance offered by the school are evident in the support for pupils and their families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. This support enables them to overcome barriers to their learning and increase their confidence and self-esteem. This is illustrated by the 'creative relaxation' sessions offered to any pupils who are anxious about anything. The school offers the well resourced and popular Sunshine Club after school, which is a considerable support to its families. Although some parents and carers and staff are concerned about strategies to manage behaviour, inspectors found these to be effective and clearly understood by pupils.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels are committed to the school and motivated to seek its continued improvement. They have identified what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning and monitor the impact of their actions conscientiously. Increasingly good use of data is being made to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils, although the data are not yet entirely reliable. The key literacy and numeracy leaders, however, are not yet sufficiently involved in the monitoring of provision and the reviewing of data with teachers. There have been some successes, but inconsistencies remain in teaching and attainment has not risen since the last inspection. The acting leaders have risen to the challenge of leading the school very well. However, the long term uncertainty about leadership has inhibited the school's development causing some concerns amongst staff, parents and carers. The newly reorganised governing body is well aware of these concerns and the securing of a new headteacher is its key priority. The governors offer strategic leadership and have been successful in dealing with a budget deficit which is placing the school on a firmer footing. They are committed and supportive of school leaders but are still developing their skills in holding leaders fully to account for the performance of the school.

Governors meet all of their statutory duties in relation to the safeguarding of pupils and the school adopts recommended good practice in all its work to ensure that children are safe and protected well. Partnerships with a range of agencies to support the needs of pupils are strong. Equal opportunities and the eradication of discrimination are enshrined in the school's policies and everyday life, but the achievement of different groups of pupils remains satisfactory. The school is a harmonious community and it promotes community cohesion well at the local level. There are also good examples of its links with the global

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community through the Comenius Project, involving countries in Western Europe, for example, but the school's strategy at global and national levels is at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly since the last inspection as a result of outstanding leadership and management. Thorough self-evaluation and a drive for improvement by the leader have led to the successful implementation of the action plan put in place following the last inspection.

When they enter the school children's skills and understanding are often below expectations for their age, notably in communication and language skills. Children are now making good progress to reach broadly average levels by the time they enter Year 1. The rapidly improving progress and attainment of boys in writing is of particular note. This is in part is due to the school's involvement in the local authority Boys' Writing project, together with a number of strategies that have successfully motivated boys to write. An appealing range of writing materials attracts both boys and girls to practise mark making in a variety of interesting activities. Children's knowledge of sounds and letters is imaginatively promoted through activities such as writing ingredients used to bake cakes in response to a letter from the giant. Children proudly read their writing in the Giant's Recipe Book to each other.

The positive start in the Nursery and the cohesion of the Early Years Foundation Stage team are key factors in children's good and accelerating progress. As a result, children behave well and are able to resolve minor disagreements for themselves. For example, two boys agreed to take turns with a drill, confident that each would cooperate. Children learn about healthy lifestyles as they enjoy cutting up fruit, knowing that 'fruit is good

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because your body needs vitamins'. All areas of learning are effectively planned, with many exciting opportunities to develop high-quality imaginative and structured play, both in and out of the classroom. Although children do have opportunities to initiate their own learning, guidance by adults sometimes inhibits children's independence. The learning environment is print rich, incorporating language from mathematical and investigative aspects as well as reading and writing. Good knowledge of how young children learn ensures that all adults undertake detailed and accurate assessments, which inform the next steps in their learning. Parents' and carers' involvement in their child's learning has increased and male members of families have played alongside children, acting as positive role models for the boys.

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	1

Views of parents and carers

Around 16% of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. A large majority were positive about the school. In particular, almost all said that their children enjoyed school and that they were kept safe whilst they were there. Many of those who added comments commended the school's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage. For example, 'Nursery staff have inspired both of my children over the years,' and, 'My child has had a fabulous year in Reception,' were typical of others. A small minority expressed concerns particularly about the leadership and management of the school. Whilst some commended the work of the current leadership team, they were concerned that the governing body has not yet appointed a permanent leader. Inspectors found that governors are determined to make the right appointment for the school and are proceeding with due urgency in order to do so. Other parents expressed the view that the school does not deal well with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found pupils' behaviour to be good and that there is little disruption to learning. They also found that procedures for dealing with behavioural issues are clear and fully understood by pupils. However, some pupils are concerned that behaviour deteriorates when their classes are taught by temporary teachers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southwold County 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 352 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	52	25	43	2	3	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	25	43	32	55	0	0	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	33	29	50	7	12	3	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	33	30	52	7	12	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	29	31	53	5	9	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	34	25	43	12	21	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	29	30	52	9	16	1	2
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)	21	36	29	50	4	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	31	28	48	11	19	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	22	28	48	13	22	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	26	28	48	9	16	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	12	21	26	45	12	21	6	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	38	28	48	5	9	3	5

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (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 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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southwold Primary School, Bicester OX26 3UU

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. We enjoyed meeting you all and I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and helpful. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

We found the school to be satisfactory. There are some really good things as well. We were impressed with your good behaviour in lessons, around the school and out at sports day, which you were all clearly enjoying. Well done! Everybody at the school looks after you very well and you told us how safe you feel.

Children get off to a very good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. After that you make steady progress as you move through the school. Teachers provide you with many interesting things to do and we could see you enjoy your learning. You also benefit a lot from your specialist teaching in languages and music. By the time you leave the school you are reaching average levels in English and mathematics.

The school has been through a difficult period since the last inspection. The governors will make sure a new headteacher arrives as soon as possible. In the meantime, your acting headteacher and her deputy, with the help of all the staff, have done a very good job in keeping things going and making improvements. We have asked them to do a few things that will help.

- We have asked your teachers to help you to make even faster progress. We want them to make sure that some of you who find things a bit easier are given work that really makes you think. We have also asked them to make sure that marking and targets help you to improve your work.
- We have asked the school to make sure that they use the information they have about your progress to help you to make faster progress. We want all your leaders to be involved in this.

With every good wish for the future.

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector

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