

Southwold County Primary School

Holm Way, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 3UU

Inspection dates

24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Even though attainment is improving at the end of both Year 2 and 6, not enough pupils make fast progress.
- Learning in writing is held back because pupils' use of grammar is weak and presentation is poor.
- In mathematics, pupils' mental skills are not good enough and this slows their learning.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and this slows learning.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils is not good enough in many lessons because they do not give pupils a chance to explain what they understand.
- The actions of senior leaders to improve teaching and learning have not been in place long enough to show a clear enough impact. Middle leaders are not yet doing enough to improve teaching and learning.
- Governors do not yet fully check on teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' achievement has improved considerably in the last year due to the concerted efforts of senior leaders and teachers.
- Attendance is above average, pupils enjoy school and they feel safe. Where teaching is effective, pupils' behaviour is good. However, pupils become restless in too many lessons.
- The new headteacher, working in close partnership with the deputy headteacher, has made sure that there are good systems for checking teaching and learning.
- Teachers now know what is expected of them because recent changes means that there are now good appraisal arrangements in place.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with a half day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 17 members of staff. Of these, three were joint observations undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and with groups of pupils. In addition to a number of meetings with members of staff, the questionnaires completed by 35 members of staff were taken into account. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- As well as informal discussions with parents and carers at the end of the school day, a meeting was held with them. Account was also taken of the 35 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation including the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching reports and pupils' work.

Inspection team

Keith Sadler, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Shela Rowan

Additional Inspector

Jameel Hassan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Southwold is an above-average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are a few from minority ethnic groups. Five pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about half the national average. These pupils, and pupils from service families, are entitled to the pupil premium (additional funding).
- The proportion of pupils supported because of the learning difficulties at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has gone through a period of uncertainty regarding senior leadership. The previous headteacher was absent for two years and the deputy headteacher was acting headteacher through this period. A new headteacher took up post in January 2012. The deputy headteacher has reverted to her substantive role.
- The school has an after-school club, *Sunshine Club*. This is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Remove inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that the large majority is good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers' questioning of pupils demands extended answers which are then used to assess pupils' understanding of their current work in order to adapt future learning
 - the pace of learning is not slowed by teachers taking too long to introduce lessons, or to provide long-winded explanations
 - marking consistently provides clear guidance for pupils' next steps in learning.
- Accelerate learning, particularly in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that activities are consistently challenging for more able pupils
 - strengthening pupils' mental and oral mathematics skills
 - ensuring sufficient mathematics equipment to enable learning to be aided by a wider range of practical resources
 - building pupils' skills in grammar by ensuring that work becomes progressively more challenging as pupils move up the school
 - improving pupils' handwriting skills
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders strengthen their role in contributing to improving teaching and learning
 - ensuring that governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school with skills that are broadly in line with expected levels. Their progress in letters and sounds and in speaking and listening is good. However, in the Nursery, their progress is hampered because activities in the outside area are not planned well enough to provide a broad range of activities.
- Improvements in teaching have resulted in a lifting of standards. Pupils now reach average standards at the end of Year 2 in writing and mathematics. In reading, standards are significantly above average. This is because the strong focus on strengthening pupils' reading skills is paying dividends. Pupils' skills in using letters and sounds have improved considerably, and the new much broader range of books is aiding their learning.
- In Key Stage 2, standards are average. Inspection findings from observations and pupils' work confirm that the learning of all groups of pupils is strengthening. Even though the previous gap between the performance of boys and girls is closing, and more pupils are starting to make better than expected progress, progress is still not strong enough. In particular, not all higher ability pupils do not make the gains in learning needed.
- Standards in writing are weaker than reading. This is because, in the past, too little attention has been paid to strengthening pupils' grammar. Pupils' skills are not being systematically built as they move up the school. In addition, presentation is poor and even the most able Year 6 pupils use print rather than cursive writing.
- In mathematics, teachers are working hard to help pupils to catch up. Even so, pupils' mental calculation skills are not strong enough and this results in them spending too long working out simple calculations. Progress is also held back because there are not enough practical mathematics resources to support pupils' learning.
- Disabled pupils and those that have additional learning needs are now given good support. Pupils' needs are identified quickly and this means that appropriate individual plans can be implemented early. The progress of pupils in receipt of extra funding has also improved because the school has invested more in support staff specifically for them. In consequence the gap in learning between these and all pupils is being closed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is good enough to help pupils make strong progress, although teaching is improving across a wide range of subjects. A common weakness is that teachers spend too long introducing lessons and this slows the pace of learning and leads to pupils becoming restless and not concentrating enough.
- Teachers generally manage pupils well and relationships are mainly good in lessons. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to work in pairs and small groups. Pupils say that they enjoy this. 'We like working together because we can learn from each other', as one Year 6 pupil commented.
- However, teachers do not have accurate expectations of what pupils can achieve because assessments are not used well enough to plan activities. Too often, teachers' questioning is not demanding enough and staff miss chances to check understanding. This is particularly the case for the more able pupils who are often given routine tasks to complete before they move on to more challenging activities. On other occasions, work is sometimes too hard for them.
- In more effective lessons, the pace of learning is brisk, activities are challenging and this excites the pupils. In a successful science lesson for example, pupils were drawing conclusions and writing the results of their investigations when considering the properties of gases, solids and liquids. Here, because the task was challenging and the teacher explained well what happens to particles in the changing state of water, pupils grasped the concept well and were keen to

explain the science.

- There are inconsistencies in marking. Some marking is thorough and comprehensive with teachers generally providing useful guidance about next steps in learning. In the best examples guidance is clear and pupils say that this helps them to see how they meet their targets. In others, although targets are made explicit, pupils are uncertain about what they have to do to meet them.
- The teaching of pupils that are disabled or have additional learning needs is becoming increasingly effective. A review of provision for these pupils has resulted in more opportunities for them to work in class rather than being withdrawn. This new strategy is closely matched to individual pupils' needs, and as a result the progress of these pupils is improving.
- The teaching of reading is effective across the school and has improved due to a strong programme of teacher training and development. Additional books have been purchased and pupils say that there is now a much better choice. Small group teaching of reading is now more systematic than previously and has resulted in pupils' progress in reading being much stronger across all year groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- A new approach to managing behaviour has been introduced. This includes the use of a red and green card system. Pupils think this is useful, although it is not consistently applied across all the classes. Nonetheless it is helping to ensure that pupils' approach to learning is more positive.
- There are a number of strengths in this area, and where teaching is good or better, pupils' behaviour in classes is good. However, pupils lose concentration in some lessons and their learning suffers. On occasion, pupils become restless and they distract other pupils. Reviews of school documentation and discussion with pupils shows that behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of that seen since the previous inspection.
- Pupils like school and their attendance is above average. Parents and carers say that their children are safe in school and pupils agree. They are appreciative of the support they get from their teachers and they say that any fears or problems they may have are quickly resolved. Staff ensure that the school's policy of intolerance to discrimination of any kind is met in full.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and this is because there is a good programme for the pupils' personal, social and emotional development. This enables them to have a strong appreciation of all forms of bullying including that which is cyber and prejudice based.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The overall impact of leadership and management is strengthening but is not yet fully established. The new headteacher has successfully built on the positive changes introduced by the acting headteacher. The school's current plans have identified correctly the areas that require improvement. Improvements in reading in particular show the positive impact of recent successful strategies.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and based on a wide range of evidence. However, middle leaders do not make a sufficiently strong contribution in checking their areas of responsibility and improving teaching and learning.
- The new headteacher has brought more rigour and accountability to school systems for checking teaching and learning. Good use is made of data to identify groups and individuals that are not making enough progress. Her deep commitment to tackling discrimination and ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities is reflected in the care taken to ensure that the provision is the

same for each class

- Staff, governors and parents and carers have positive views about the changes brought about. Teachers, share the commitment and determination to ensure that achievement should strengthen.
 - The curriculum provides suitably planned opportunities for all groups of pupils. Good attention is paid to support the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has rightly focused on ensuring that the curriculum for basic skills is made more effective. Specialist teaching of music and French enhances learning in these subjects and the school's curriculum for music is particularly strong.
 - The local authority has provided good support in the past including the mentoring of the acting headteacher and support for mathematics. This has dwindled recently though the authority has brokered a partnership between the school and a Buckinghamshire school.
 - Performance management procedures are being used well to hold teachers to account. This has also given rise to a well-founded training programme for teachers aimed at ironing out inconsistencies. Few teachers have had salary increases as a result of the appraisal process even though teaching is improving.
 - Senior staff ensure that additional funding provided for entitled pupils is spent effectively. This includes one-to-one support as necessary, additional staffing, particularly in the Nursery and Reception years where almost all of the children of service families are placed, and also to enable entitled pupils to attend school visits including residential trips.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are supportive of the school and regularly attend school events. However, they are not in a strong position to provide the necessary challenge to senior leaders. Although a few members of the governing body attend classes, the information gained is patchy and it is not used well. There are strengths. These include ensuring that regulatory requirements for safeguarding and staff vetting procedures are fully in place, and holding the school to account for financial matters including the use of pupil premium funding.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>
Boarding/residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	123089
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	406138
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	Anna Ballance
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 June 2011
Telephone number	01869 324061
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