

Sywell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Overstone Road, Sywell, Northampton, NN6 0AW

Inspection dates 6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most of the teaching is good; aspects of teaching are exemplary.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and ensure they are reminded of their literacy and numeracy targets when working in other lessons.
- Pupils behave well and have a good understanding of personal safety.
- The headteacher and the governing body work together effectively to improve provision and outcomes for pupils.
- The remodelling of the teaching spaces and the building of a new hall have improved the learning environment considerably.
- The richness of the curriculum is evident in the range of quality displays throughout the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupil's progress in writing lags behind that in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of some pupils, particularly the more able, are not high enough.
- Not all pupils are challenged at the start and end of every lesson.
- Some pupils have still to consolidate their skills in undertaking mathematical investigations.
- Not all the expected outcomes in the school development plan are sufficiently precise or linked closely enough to pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a lack of recorded evidence of the governing body asking senior leaders challenging questions.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of other shorter visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority. He heard some pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan.
- The inspector took account of the 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in making the judgements.

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- All pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportions of pupils supported through school action, and at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs, are broadly similar to national averages.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teachers consistently:
 - use assessment information to plan more demanding work for the more-able pupils and to challenge pupils of different abilities throughout every lesson
 - focus on raising pupils' attainment and accelerating their progress in writing by making certain they improve their spelling, use punctuation correctly and form well-constructed sentences
 - consolidate pupils' skills in undertaking mathematical investigations.
- Improve the leadership of the school by:
 - reviewing the measures by which the actions in the school development plan can be checked and make certain that they are closely linked to pupils' attainment and progress
 - making sure that the minutes of the governing body's meetings meticulously record issues raised with senior leaders and how they are followed up.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress is good. During the brief period, while all the building work was being undertaken and there was considerable disruption to the normal class routines, pupils' progress slowed and standards dipped. Close scrutiny of individual pupils' assessment records show that the large majority of pupils are now making good progress in reading and mathematics and average progress in writing.
- Pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to reach above the expected standards in reading and mathematics by the end of the year. Standards in writing are not quite as high.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. The advantageous staffing levels and supportive learning environment help them settle quickly and make good progress.
- By the end of Year 2, most pupils read reasonably confidently and are developing their skills in using phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help them read. Their attainment is at least that expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, most of the pupils read with expression and at a good pace. They tackle unfamiliar words by using the context of the sentence or breaking the word down into its various parts. They talk knowledgeably about different authors, particularly those the school has recently promoted.
- In Year 2 pupils' writing skills are very variable. Some pupils write at length using a good range of vocabulary and spell words with reasonable accuracy. They have a secure understanding of basic punctuation and routinely include full stops and commas in their writing. However, most have yet to acquire these skills. Many do not use phonics sufficiently confidently to try to spell unfamiliar words. By Year 6 pupils write for a range of purposes and in different styles, for example, story writing, poems, letters, play-scripts and recording factual information. Many include adjectives, alliteration and similes to enhance their writing. However, some pupils' basic skills are not sufficiently secure; for example, sentences are not always well constructed, there are some basic grammatical errors and punctuation is not always used correctly.
- In Year 2 pupils are developing their understanding of number well. They are able to gather information for tally charts, create pictograms and use coordinates. By Year 6 pupils are confident when applying their knowledge of number to solve simple algebraic equations. They work well with each other and use mathematical terminology correctly to explain their reasoning. Throughout the school, the emphasis placed on promoting the pupils' skills in undertaking mathematical investigations has accelerated their progress. However, a large minority of the pupils have still to consolidate their newly acquired skills.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. The headteacher monitors their progress carefully, and additional support, if needed, is provided. This ensures they are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils. As a result, the gap in performance between them and other pupils is closing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching is good. Teachers have responded well to the initiatives to ensure that pupils make good progress. They have attended courses and developed links with nearby schools to share and build on good practice.
- Teachers are increasingly using their good knowledge of the pupils to plan work that is closely matched to their level of attainment and the pace at which they learn. However, teachers do not always make it clear what they expect pupils of different abilities to do and to learn. This is particularly when they are teaching the whole class, for example at the start and end of lessons. Occasionally, teachers do not expect enough of some of the more-able pupils.
- Teachers use questioning skills well to assess the level of the pupils' understanding and to

challenge their thinking. They mark the pupils' work methodically, and consistently offer pupils clear guidance to improve their work in English and mathematics. There are examples of good marking in other subjects. Reference is made to the pupils' targets in English and mathematics.

- Most lessons proceed at a quick pace, and pupils make a full contribution to the lesson. Good use is made of opportunities for pupils to discuss matters with a 'talk partner'. This helps to develop their understanding of the work. It also promotes their speaking and listening and social skills well. Teachers usually convey high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Planning is reasonably effective and links between subjects are good. The emphasis on ensuring pupils have more opportunities to undertake mathematical investigations is proving successful. Pupils say they enjoy finding things out in this way, it makes learning much more fun. However, there are some lost opportunities to promote pupils' mathematical investigation skills. Teachers listen to pupils read on a regular basis and provide them with opportunities during the day to read independently.
- Additional support staff are usually deployed well. They work effectively with the class teachers and have a good relationship with the pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They are polite and routinely demonstrate good manners. They welcome visitors to the school, step back for adults and hold doors open.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a good understanding of potential dangers, for example, the potential hazards from chemicals stored in the caretaker's room or when using the internet.
- Pupils want to learn. This contributes to their good progress.
- Pupils are proud of the closeness of the school community and get on well together. One pupil said, 'We are all here to help each other and to make certain we are happy and safe.'
- Incidents of bullying of any kind, such as name-calling, fighting, racial, religious and cyber-bullying, are very rare. Pupils say that if an incident occurred, they are sure that it would be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and taking responsibility. They ensure that displays and equipment are treated with respect and look forward to using the 'spiritual and secret gardens' once they have been completed. Their attendance is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- Under the effective leadership of the headteacher and with the guidance and support of the governing body, the school is moving forward. Much has been accomplished in improving the learning environment and building relationships with nearby schools.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have been reviewed. The details are recorded and analysed meticulously by the headteacher. She knows all the pupils individually and regularly discusses their progress with class teachers. Lessons are observed and teachers are asked to explain if any pupil has not made the expected progress. The headteacher uses this information to advise the governing body if individual teachers should receive a salary increase.
- Staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. These are recorded in the well-laid-out school development plan. The actions are appropriate, but the measures by which the impact can be checked are not sufficiently precise or linked closely enough to pupils' attainment and progress.
- Good displays throughout the school reflect a stimulating and broad curriculum. In all classes, there is a strong focus on developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The artwork is of very good quality.
- The local authority has provided minimal support to the school over the last few years. There have been several changes of school improvement officer. The most recent change was in

September 2012. It is too early to form a view of the current support. In the past, the school has bought in an external consultant to help with the headteacher's annual performance review and to improve the quality of teaching.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body supports and checks the work of the school well but this is not recorded systematically. Consequently, the governing body does not have robust systems for ensuring that issues are followed up rigorously. Governors are increasingly frequent visitors and are developing their skills through regular attendance at courses. The governing body has responded promptly to the recent changes in teacher appraisal and capability procedures. The related policy was updated for the start of the autumn term and the governing body has ensured that the performance of staff, including the headteacher, has been reviewed. The school's budget is checked regularly. The significant overspend to cover the cost of the building alterations is being reduced steadily. The governing body is aware of the additional money the school receives through pupil premium funding and checks that the money is being spent on improving provision and the impact this has on pupils' attainment and progress. Most of the money is spent on additional staffing for one-to-one support and small-group work. The governing body makes sure the school meets national requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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>

School details

Unique reference number	122030
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	403484

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Herrick
Headteacher	Sue Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2007
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