

Swanmead Community School

Ditton Street, Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 0BL

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Pupils make good progress. They make strong gains in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well, have good subject knowledge and mark work well.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and conduct themselves well both inside and outside of lessons. Attendance is high.
- The school looks after its pupils well and they know how to stay safe.
- The headteacher and other leaders have put in place well thought out plans which have led to strong improvements in pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- Governors are effective in the way they challenge the school and keep strict control of the finances.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally teachers do not plan work at the right level of difficulty, especially for more-able pupils.
- The achievement of pupils who receive the pupil premium lags behind that of other pupils. Leaders are not yet using information on the progress made by these pupils as well as possible to help reduce gaps in achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, of which five were jointly observed with school leaders. They observed pupils' behaviour around the school.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and case studies. They noted the frequency and quality of teachers' marking.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, one from each key stage, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle managers. There was also a discussion with the Local Leader of Education who has been working with the school to help secure improvement.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Mallone, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Justine Hocking

Additional Inspector

Marian Marks

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Swanmead Community School is a smaller-than-average-sized middle school.
- Most pupils are White British. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is small. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that pupils make more rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils, especially for the more-able pupils.
- Build on recent improvements to the achievement of pupils who receive additional funding, so that they attain as well as their classmates, by making better use of information on their progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with levels of attainment close to expectations. At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 3 so that they leave the school in Year 8 able to read and write well and with good achievement in mathematics.
- Pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills well across a wide variety of subjects. They are aware of when to use technical language to express themselves precisely. They write well, with a secure understanding of how to match the style to the purpose. They reinforce their arithmetical skills by using them in practical applications. This whole-school focus on literacy and numeracy contributes to pupils' good progress in all subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Paired reading between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils has enabled both groups to think more deeply about what they are reading and to discover books which may be more challenging for them. This has helped improve progress in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress that is at least as good as, and in some cases better than, their peers.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their classmates. This is also true of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Rates of progress for those who receive additional funding are similar to other pupils' rates of progress. Nevertheless, their attainment lags behind that of their peers. In 2013, at the end of Year 6, pupils were on average 16 months behind others in reading. In writing, they were two years behind, and in mathematics they were eight months behind. However, there are signs that these gaps are now beginning to close.
- Whilst more-able pupils achieve well in reading, their progress in writing and mathematics has been particularly strong. In the past there has not been a consistent level of challenge for these pupils, although this is now being addressed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, good relationships with pupils and mark work well.
- In lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check and promote deeper understanding of concepts. They make good use of small group discussion so that pupils are able to test out their ideas. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils were asked to discuss how they would use specific pieces of apparatus to design an experiment to measure rates of drainage in soil samples. Because they were able to share their ideas, they were better able to understand the processes involved before they conducted the experiment.
- Subject teachers make good use of resources, for example punctuation and technical vocabulary displays to help extend pupils' literacy skills. In lessons, teachers insist on the use of the correct subject terminology.
- The school uses a 'triple challenge' system to help set work at the appropriate level for each pupil. However, this does not work well when pupils opt for an easier challenge than they are capable of achieving. As a result, some pupils, particularly the more able, do not always make as much progress as they could.
- Work is marked frequently and well, so that pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve. Pupils follow up their teachers' suggestions and this makes a strong contribution to their progress.
- In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils had to highlight adjectives and similes in a character description and check each other's work and as a result, they were able to write better character descriptions of their own.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and understand the needs of pupils assigned to them. As

a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning; they are keen to learn and remain focused on tasks they are given. They collaborate well in paired and small group discussion and listen carefully in whole-class sessions.
- Pupils move around the school calmly and quietly with consideration for others, for example holding doors open for them to pass. They show respect for their environment. There is no litter or graffiti and displays are in good condition. Pupils treat facilities where they learn outside the classroom, such as the school allotment and greenhouse, with care. The many examples of outstanding art work around the school are treated with great respect.
- Pupils readily take on responsibility, for example in the 'reading buddies' scheme, where older pupils are paired with younger ones in order to help support and develop their reading. All pupils take part in this process, which reflects the school's approach to making sure that everyone has the opportunity to be involved in all activities.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are uncommon and, as a result of the school's work to address this, they are reducing. The HUB (Help Understand Behaviour), a unit where specialist staff work with pupils who are experiencing difficulties with managing behaviour, is a strength of the school.
- Fixed-term exclusions are rare and there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years.
- Bullying is uncommon and is dealt with well. Pupils know who to turn to if they need help.
- Attendance is high compared with similar schools nationally. As a result of the school's work to improve attendance, there are no significant differences in the attendance of specific groups of pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media.
- The school has worked well to tackle discriminatory and derogatory language. Incidents of these are rare.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because attitudes to learning are not yet exemplary across the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other leaders set consistently high expectations of teachers and pupils. As a result, rates of progress have improved strongly since the last inspection.
- The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and has effectively implemented plans for improvement. For example, its focus on literacy across all subjects has contributed to the rise in attainment in reading.
- Pupils' progress is effectively checked and this has helped to contribute to improvements in the overall progress of pupils, especially in reading. Attainment is now broadly in line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. Although leaders check on the progress of pupils eligible for additional funding, they have only recently begun to use data effectively to focus on the gap in attainment between these pupils and their classmates.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is effectively used. The school employs teaching assistants who work with those whose attainment is below age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. These pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 7 and 8.
- The additional money provided to support competitive sports has had no impact yet as it has been used to employ a specialist sports coach from September 2014.
- The performance management of teachers has effectively linked the school's needs to their professional development. As a result, the increased focus on literacy in all subjects has

contributed to the rise in overall standards of literacy. Performance management has a clear link to pay progression. If teachers do not meet their targets, pay rises are withheld.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting pupils' needs and promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school works well with its partner upper school to secure a smooth transition for pupils in Year 8. It has adjusted Year 5 teaching to make it more like that of the first school. This has helped improve rates of progress in Key Stage 2.
- The local authority has arranged useful support for the school by securing the services of a Local Leader of Education. This has enabled the school to make sure that pupils make faster progress in literacy and mathematics and to improve its use of information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- School leaders and managers have demonstrated a clear capacity to improve. They have significantly improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. This has led to faster rates of progress and higher pupil achievement.
- All safeguarding requirements are met.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- There has been an external review of governance since the last inspection. This has resulted in governors being better able to carry out their duties. They have received training in the use of data about pupils' achievement and in safeguarding. They know about the quality of teaching, how performance is managed and how this links to staff training. They undertake regular visits to the school where they are able to verify for themselves the actions taken by school leaders and their impact. Governors understand the ways in which the additional funding is spent and the effect it has. They keep the finances under close scrutiny and challenge and support the school in equal measure.
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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>

School details

Unique reference number	123875
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	431674

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Horne
Headteacher	Mark Walker
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 September 2012
Telephone number	01460 52431
Fax number	01460 55305
Email address	office@swanmead.somerset.sch.uk

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