

Southwold County Primary School

Holm Way, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 3UU

Inspection dates

22–23 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There is not enough effective teaching to make sure that all pupils make good progress over time.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is not high enough, particularly in writing.
- Teachers do not consistently set work which is at the right level of difficulty for the different abilities of the pupils, particularly the most able.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their writing because teachers do not identify and explain to pupils how to tackle new learning in lessons and when they mark pupils' books.
- Pupils do not use punctuation and grammar accurately in their writing.
- The early years provision requires improvement. Staff do not always pinpoint how to help children to extend their learning, particularly in their early writing skills.
- Leaders have not always ensured that features of effective teaching have helped improve the quality of teaching for everyone.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good enough. Pupils sometimes lose focus and the pace of learning slows.
- Teachers who lead subjects are not fully involved in finding out about what is going well and what needs to improve so that they can drive forward changes necessary.
- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to provide a good balance of challenge and support.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to speed up the rate of improvement.
- Pupils are confident and fluent readers because they are taught about the sounds that letters make and they apply their knowledge well.
- Pupils enjoy school and the subjects they learn. They feel safe and their parents and teachers agree.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons and parts of lessons, some of them jointly with the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other leaders in school, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, and with parents and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of parents from informal discussions in school.
- Inspectors considered school leaders’ views on the quality of the school’s work and their plans for school improvement, as well as information about pupils’ progress. They also looked at teachers’ planning, pupils’ work, documentation about safeguarding procedures and examples of the targets teachers are given as part of the management of their performance.
- The inspection team analysed the 31 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Jeanne Simpson, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Matthew Shirley	Additional inspector
Lucy Maughan	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Southwold Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The assistant headteacher is temporarily carrying out the role of deputy headteacher while the post-holder is on maternity leave.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs on the school roll supported by school action is 9%. This is about the same as most schools.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is 7%, which is also similar to most schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The Nursery age children attend on a part-time basis.
- The children in the Reception classes are all full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement through the school by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that more pupils make rapid progress
 - providing learning activities which are well matched to the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able
 - helping pupils to concentrate on their work and making sure that low-level disruption is quickly dealt with
 - making sure that teachers and teaching assistants in Early Years Foundation Stage find ways to help children to take the next steps in their learning.
- Raise pupils' writing confidence and abilities by:
 - helping pupils to understand how to improve the quality of their work, both in lessons and when teachers are marking pupils' work
 - ensuring that pupils apply the skills they learn about punctuation and grammar in all their writing activities.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - providing opportunities for teachers who lead subjects or areas of the school's work to play a full part in finding out about what is going well and driving forward any improvements
 - sharing the features of effective teaching to help others to improve
 - improving governors' understanding of the effectiveness of the school so that they can provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support
 - seeking to recruit new governors as soon as possible.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, until recently, achievement has not improved rapidly enough. Following the last inspection, the headteacher set about raising expectations of pupils and staff. This resulted in a significant number of staff changes, including at leadership level. This disruption has meant that it has taken too long to ensure consistency in teaching.
- The headteacher regularly checks on what is going well and what needs to improve. Her judgements are accurate. The areas included in the school's long-term plans for improvement are appropriate and the actions being taken are the right ones to bring about the improvements necessary.
- Teachers who lead subjects are relatively new to their roles. Recent training is helping them to develop the skills they need and they show impressive determination to raise standards in their areas. However, as yet, they are not fully involved in using their skills to drive forward improvements in their subjects.
- Teachers say all the staff are working together well to meet the challenging targets that have been set to raise standards. They also say that the objectives they have to improve their own performance are challenging and that, as a result, the quality of teaching is now starting to improve. The records kept by the school and the steady improvement to standards indicate that their views are correct.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and those spoken to informally in the playground say that the school is getting better. Most of the parents who responded on Parent View would recommend the school.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the subjects they learn. The school has planned for the introduction of the new curriculum carefully. Appropriate links are made across subjects. The plans for each of the topics include details of the skills that pupils need to develop as they progress through the school.
- The school is effective in promoting the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The school is rich with high-quality displays of the pupils' art work and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop a love of music. Pupils learn about other cultures and the school's values enable pupils to develop understanding, respect and tolerance for those whose beliefs or lifestyles are different from their own. As a result, pupils understand about life in modern Britain, including what it means to live in a democratic society.
- The school has used the additional funding for primary sport effectively. Pupils are able to enjoy an increasingly wide range of sports and they regularly take part in local and national sports competitions and festivals. Pupils' attitudes have improved and far more girls willingly take part in sport. The school's affiliation with a local sports partnership enables teachers to develop their own skills so that the good practice can be sustained after the funding has finished.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity by checking that any gaps in the achievement of different groups of pupils are quickly identified and tackled. They take effective actions to close the gaps, including for the pupils eligible for additional funding.
- The school's systems for safeguarding of pupils meet statutory requirements. Leaders know the pupils well and careful records are kept about pupils' well-being. There are effective partnerships with outside agencies.
- The local authority has provided good levels of support and challenge. The school particularly values the recent support from a headteacher of an outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to improving the school. However, there are a number of vacancies and there are not enough people with the range of skills necessary to provide high levels of challenge and support. Governors have carried out an audit of their skills to help them to identify the areas they need to strengthen when they recruit new members. Individual governors use their skills well and they attend training to help them to be more effective. Governors do not have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing compared with other schools nationally. This limits their effectiveness. However, they know that the quality of teaching has improved. They increasingly check that effective teachers are rewarded by progression through the pay scales and that underperformance is tackled. They know that they need to improve and they are keen to take advantage of advice and support offered.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In lessons, too many pupils do not concentrate on their learning and are too easily distracted. In some classes, pupils apply themselves well because they are

interested in what they are doing. In other classes, there is too much low-level disruption and lessons do not flow smoothly.

- Around the school, pupils are respectful to each other and to adults, and they respond promptly to adults' requests. Pupils show pride in their school and they take care with the presentation of their work.
- Most parents and teachers think that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved. Pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions, and they think that they are all treated fairly. However, some pupils say that not all the teachers have the same high expectations and that some teachers 'let you get away with things'.
- Pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour are given good support. Adults guide them to make appropriate choices and help them to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Most pupils respond well to the extra help they are given and exclusions are rare.
- In the playground, pupils play well together. At the end of playtime, they return calmly to their classes so that learning can begin straight away.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that the teachers care about them and they are confident that adults would listen to them if they were worried about anything.
- Pupils feel safe, and their parents agree. The school site is secure and visitors are checked appropriately.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They are proud of the work that the school council did last year to raise awareness of bullying. They say that there are very few incidents of bullying and that any which do occur are dealt with effectively so that they do not happen again.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including through learning about road safety and cycling proficiency. They say that e-safety is given high priority and they know what to do to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Pupils also learn about the challenges they face as they get older so that they are well prepared for life beyond primary school.
- The school checks that pupils who are away from school are safe. Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy being in school and because the school makes sure that pupils know the importance of regular attendance.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Since the time of the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has not improved rapidly enough to ensure that all pupils have made good or better progress over time from their starting points.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve. For the most able, this means that too few have reached the higher levels by the time they leave the school, particularly in writing.
- Some teachers set the same work for all the pupils. As a result, the less-able pupils find the task too difficult and the most able find the work too easy. At these times, the pupils become distracted and the pace of learning slows for all the class.
- Where learning is most successful, the teachers use information about pupils' achievement to identify precisely what pupils of all abilities need to learn next. Pupils make rapid progress because levels of challenge are appropriate and the lively pace keeps pupils interested. The pupils know what they have to do to be successful which means that they can challenge themselves. Teachers check regularly that pupils understand the new ideas and pupils benefit from sharing their understanding with each other. This effective practice has not been used effectively enough to ensure that all teachers improve their teaching skills.
- Pupils practise their writing skills regularly, not only in English lessons, but in all the subjects they learn. However, they do not always readily apply the skills they learn about punctuation and grammar when they write, which affects the quality of their work.
- Teachers do not always identify and help pupils to understand the next steps they need to take to improve the quality of their writing. When this happens, progress slows. This lack of clarity also means that the comments teachers write when they mark pupils' work are not always helpful in moving learning forward.
- Improving the quality of teaching in mathematics has been a focus for the school. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and they have made sure that pupils have a good understanding of basic number facts. This is helping pupils to carry out calculations more rapidly.
- Reading is taught well and pupils have a love of books. Displays around the school promote reading for

pleasure.

- Pupils say that the targets they have for writing and mathematics help them to check for themselves that they are improving their work. Pupils often write comments at the end of a piece of work about how well they think they have done which helps the teacher to identify those who need to move on.
- Pupils who receive additional funding, as well as those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, benefit from the small group or one-to-one help that they have. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good levels of support both in regular lessons and when they work with groups on different programmes. They check that pupils understand new learning through the questions they ask and they swiftly address any misconceptions, which helps the pupils to catch up.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, achievement has not improved rapidly enough. Too few pupils make the progress necessary to enable them to reach the higher levels, particularly in writing.
- In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with national averages. However, attainment at the higher levels is below average in all subjects.
- Attainment at the expected level in all subjects at the end of Key Stage 2 has improved over the last two years and is now broadly average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has caught up with national averages in reading and mathematics. However, overall, the performance of the most-able pupils falls below their capabilities. In writing, the proportion achieving higher levels remains below average with too few pupils making rapid and sustained progress over time.
- Information about pupils' achievement kept by the school indicates that pupils are now making better progress than in the past. However, progress still needs to speed up even more, particularly in writing.
- Pupils achieve well in reading because, from the time they start school, they are taught the sounds that letters make and the skills they need to become confident readers. They use their understanding well to read unfamiliar words and they talk enthusiastically about their love of reading and books. Standards in the national reading check at the end of Year 1 have risen rapidly over the last two years and are now above average.
- Pupils eligible for additional funding make progress, which is usually at least as good as their classmates. The latest national information shows that, by the time they leave, they are about two terms behind other pupils in the school. In reading and mathematics, their attainment is about the same as similar pupils nationally, while in writing, they are about two terms behind. However, the numbers in each year group are very small so attainment often varies widely from year to year.
- The progress of all pupils is checked carefully so any pupils who are falling behind are spotted quickly. The pupils who are identified as being disabled or having special educational needs receive a variety of help, including one-to-one or small-group work and programmes of support. In the past, progress has been uneven. The school knows what has helped pupils the most and what has not been so effective. The changes made are now helping pupils to catch up more consistently and so the gaps are closing.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The rates of progress for children as they move through Nursery and Reception classes is broadly in line with expectations. Although some children make good progress, too few make consistently rapid enough progress across all the areas of their learning, and in this respect, they are not fully prepared for Year 1.
- When Nursery-age children start school, their skills are generally slightly below those expected for their age. When children from other settings join them at the beginning of the Reception Year, overall, their skills remain below the typical levels for their age.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception class is slightly below average, though achievement is improving year-on-year. This is because information about how well children are learning is being used with increasing accuracy to provide learning activities which meet the needs of the children. For example, the school is ensuring that the interests of boys are being addressed better because teachers have identified that this is an area for improvement.
- Children make a secure start in learning to read because the quality of teaching about the sounds that letters make is good. However, the teaching of writing is less secure. Teachers do not always make sure that children are helped systematically to learn the skills they need to become good writers. There are too few examples of children's early writing on display. This means that children cannot compare their own

efforts with those of others.

- The leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and the areas which need to improve. Parents who spoke to inspectors in the playground were very complimentary about the positive start their children have had in Nursery and Reception.
- Children enjoy learning from a wide range of activities, both indoors and outside. They cooperate well and they are able to concentrate for extended periods of time. Some adults make careful observations and develop the children's skills and understanding through the conversations they have and the questions they ask. However, this is not consistent and some adults miss opportunities to help the children to take the next steps in their learning.
- All adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They model politeness and respect which helps children to build good relationships with each other and with the adults.
- Adults make sure that children are safe and develop safe habits.

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	123089
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	449022

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	Gavin Bray
Headteacher	Anna Ballance
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 October 2012
Telephone number	01869 324061
Email address	school2607@southwold.oxon.sch.uk

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