

Swingate Primary School

Sultan Road, Lordswood, Chatham, ME5 8TJ

Inspection dates 11–12 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, very ably supported by the senior leadership team, has secured a good quality of education across the amalgamated school.
- Just over a year since becoming a primary school, there is a strong sense of unity, teamwork and togetherness.
- The senior leadership team, governing body and local authority know exactly where the school's strengths and current limitations are. Together, they have a strong track record of making improvements to teaching and achievement. They ensure that the school continues to move forward.
- Adults work exceptionally hard to make school exciting and engaging for pupils. The environment is extremely rich and stimulating. This reflects the many ways that the school very effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Training and regular feedback for teachers help them to be increasingly effective and so teaching is usually good. Teachers make sure pupils know what they are supposed to learn and how to improve their work. Consequently, pupils are making good progress and achieving well.
- Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to their learning. They take a great pride in their writing and other achievements. They behave well overall, and sometimes show exceptional empathy.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They have an exceptionally clear understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe.
- The school works hard to make strong links with parents and carers, including through sessions for younger children yet to start school.
- The early years is good. Children do well in Nursery and the Reception Year and are well prepared for Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The quality of teaching is not high enough to secure an outstanding level of learning and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although standards are rising, they have not reached the consistently above average levels that would represent outstanding achievement from pupils' starting points.
- Although their role is strengthening, middle leaders do not always focus on checking carefully that their actions make enough difference to the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes to gather a wide range of information about what teaching, learning and pupils' behaviour are typically like. They observed lessons, extensively scrutinised pupils' work and talked with them about their learning. Much of this evidence gathering was done alongside senior leaders.
- In addition, inspectors spoke with parents and carers, teachers and leaders, and reviewed the school's own records and evaluations.
- Discussions were also held with a representative of the local authority and three members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered 71 responses to Parent View and 42 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- Documentation relating to safeguarding and other aspects of leadership and management were sampled.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alison Botarelli	Additional Inspector
Peter Lacey-Hastings	Additional Inspector
Carol Vant	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Swingate Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school. It was formed by the amalgamation of Swingate Infant and Nursery School and Spinnens Acre Junior School in September 2013.
- The newly amalgamated school has retained the historic performance and inspection history of the former outstanding infant and nursery school. When the former junior school was last inspected in March 2012, it was judged to be satisfactory overall, removing the school from special measures that had been in place for the previous 18 months. The headteacher of the former infant and nursery school is now the headteacher of the amalgamated school following a period in which the two schools federated under her leadership.
- Approximately one fifth of all pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils. This is a broadly average proportion compared nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also broadly similar to the national average, at approximately 15% of pupils.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Since amalgamation, the school has not had a set of published results to compare against the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The early years provision contains a Nursery that has separate morning and afternoon sessions and three full-time Reception Year classes.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club run by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine teaching in order to lift standards to securely above average by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring all teachers match senior leaders' relentlessly high expectations, especially of pupils currently working in line with age-appropriate standards
 - fully implementing plans to ensure that pupils' reading books have just the right level of difficulty
 - sharpening the focus on pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar to further improve their writing
 - ensuring pupils master their mathematics skills through regular opportunities to use and apply them in different contexts and to solve problems.
- Support middle leaders to evaluate the difference their actions make and maximise their impact, including in helping to secure more teaching that is as effective as the best.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's relentlessly ambitious and determined approach for the school and its pupils is driving the school forward. Together with an impressive team of senior leaders, she is taking great care to make lasting improvements rather than 'quick fixes'. As a result, improvements are being sustained.
- There is a strong sense of unity and cohesion across the school, just over a year since amalgamation. Morale is high. The very large number of staff that responded to the inspection questionnaire are unanimously proud to work at the school.
- Senior leaders know the school extremely well. They are frank and honest in identifying where the school can still improve. The rigorous checks leaders make of the school's work, including the quality of teaching, are used effectively to diagnose the right actions to continue moving forward.
- Middle leaders are beginning to have a greater role in securing improvements. They are involved in checking the quality of teaching and achievement in their relevant areas. However, sometimes they focus too much on what they have done, rather than what difference their actions have made. As a result, they have not had as much impact as they could in ensuring that all teaching is as effective as it could be.
- Leaders analyse in detail how well different groups of pupils are doing, such as disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs. They use this analysis to target support, including using additional funding, to help them catch up with others and secure equality of opportunity. Teachers are held to account for the progress their pupils make.
- The headteacher values the supportive challenge provided by the local authority. This constructive relationship, grounded in openness and honesty, has helped senior leaders reflect critically that they are always moving in the right direction.
- Through the home-school support worker, the school provides additional support for parents and carers that goes far beyond what is routinely seen in many schools. This includes a wide range of courses from first aid to parenting courses and 'messy play' for families with young children. Parents and carers completing Parent View over the last year were unanimous that children are happy at school, make good progress and are taught well.
- The school's ethos, creative approach, balance and range of different subjects support pupils' positive attitudes and good progress. The considerable and thoughtful emphasis placed on activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly noteworthy and ensures there is no discrimination. During the inspection, the empathy demonstrated by pupils in an extremely moving Remembrance Day assembly of poetry, images and song was striking. These wide-ranging experiences, including of cultures not reflected in the immediate community, help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Leaders are working towards ensuring that subjects also have sufficient academic rigour to secure the highest standards academically.
- Leaders and governors have used additional sports funding well to secure a positive and varied impact. This includes better quality physical education teaching and significantly more pupil involvement in inter-school sports competitions. There are holiday schemes (including participation by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs) and more than three times as many after-school sports clubs.
- The school has strong systems to safeguard children, including regular audits to check that these are working. The school is proactive in links with other professionals and agencies to protect children. Regular training for staff at all levels is made relevant to their particular role.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is effective. Governors have a strong involvement and influence in the strategic direction of the school. They are knowledgeable and well informed about the school's performance and the quality of teaching. Using a range of information, including the school's performance data, governors challenge senior and middle leaders, requiring reports and information from them. This includes checking the difference made by funding decisions to the achievement for particular groups, such as disadvantaged pupils. They have a good awareness of the school's rigorous performance management procedures which determine and align well with pay decisions. The governing body has supported the headteacher in the robust tackling of underperformance where necessary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning, reflected in the quality and pride in their work as well as their engagement in lessons. Just occasionally, when the level of challenge is not quite right, the attention of a few wanders from the task in hand, which temporarily slows their progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and spoke of being keen not to miss a day, even if they do not feel well. They especially enjoy the themed days, and recognise that these also help them improve their other work.
- The conduct of pupils around the school, in the playground and during breakfast club and assemblies is usually good and sometimes better. Systematic recording of any incidents, together with the almost exclusively positive views of pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors, indicate that this is the typical daily experience.
- The school is very inclusive and is successful in managing pupils with particular behavioural difficulties.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils consistently report that they feel safe. As one pupil said of the adults in school, 'They care about every child.'
- Pupils across the school have an excellent understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe, relative to their age. This ranges from recent heightened awareness of safety relating to fireworks, to how to stay safe when using the internet and new technologies.
- Pupils have a thorough understanding of bullying. They are extremely confident that very rare concerns are dealt with thoroughly by the adults. School records confirm this view. Discriminatory language of any kind, including that relating to racism or homophobia, is not tolerated and tackled robustly on the extremely rare occasions it may occur.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to create a positive climate for learning. Rich, stimulating environments and positive relationships contribute to this. The sounds of wartime songs sung by the choir in the nearby hall added real atmosphere to a Year 6 lesson about *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo. The life-size horse sculpture and poppy display nearby also brought learning alive for pupils.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to read and love to do so. Younger pupils learn to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) to their reading and writing. The school is very successful at helping those who have not reached the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check to catch up before they finish Key Stage 1.
- Older pupils reading more challenging texts are learning to express opinions about different authors. Leaders' own recent evaluations have identified that the books pupils read do not always have precisely the right level of difficulty to help pupils develop their reading skills as quickly as they could.
- Pupils' learning is interesting. The real purpose or exciting stimulus to write is equally motivating for boys and girls. The recent dinosaur week, accompanied by giant dinosaur models, footprints and eggs throughout the school, led to high-quality writing, including for the most able pupils. These experiences particularly help pupils with the content and effectiveness of their writing, and the motivation helps increase their stamina. Sometimes, their mastery of spelling, punctuation and grammar is less advanced.
- The consistent adoption of the school's marking policy across the school is helping pupils to see clearly what they have done well and how to improve their work. Pupils value this and particularly enjoy using the purple pens to respond. At its best, this dialogue is having a big impact, for example, helping pupils to explain which part of a mathematics concept they do not understand so that this can be addressed.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their mathematics, including older, more-able pupils who often find the work still challenging. Regular homework is helping to ensure that pupils' basic number skills remain secure. In some classes, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills to solve a problem or in a different context to ensure that their understanding is really secure.
- Strong leadership for pupils with special educational needs has ensured that class teachers are accountable for the progress of these pupils. Teachers work in partnership with teaching assistants to ensure that these pupils achieve well in lessons, supplemented by carefully targeted extra help where necessary.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils are making good progress in all key stages. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs, White British pupils and the more able.
- The school's own tracking of pupils' progress and the standards they reach, together with work in pupils' books, shows that pupils are learning well and developing skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics securely and quickly. The acceleration in rates of progress in writing means that overall these are now broadly similar to those in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards in different subjects are accurate. There are robust systems to check and agree these across the school and with other schools. Where inspectors found slight variations in rates of progress between subjects in particular classes from looking at pupils' work, this matched well with the school's own figures about pupils' progress.
- As pupils are making quicker progress for an increasingly sustained period, so standards across the school are rising. They are not yet high enough to represent outstanding achievement relative to pupils' starting points.
- Across the school, gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others are closing in most instances. Provisional 2014 Key Stage 2 results show that disadvantaged pupils attained higher levels than others in school in mathematics, similar levels in reading and were approximately six weeks behind others in writing, significantly less than seen nationally. Compared with other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils in school were behind by a term and a half in reading, just over a term in writing and just under a term in mathematics. All of these gaps are smaller than the national picture.
- Rates of progress have also accelerated for the most able pupils, so these pupils also achieve well. A similar proportion of pupils as seen nationally attain the higher levels at Key Stages 1 and 2. The school is rightly proud that in 2014, five pupils attained Level 6 in mathematics for the first time, equivalent to the standards that might be expected in Year 9 in secondary school. However, expectations are not always high enough of pupils working at age-related expectations to ensure that the proportion of pupils that exceed them is rising as quickly as it could across all year groups.
- Pupils with special educational needs mostly achieve well relative to their individual starting points. Many pupils currently on roll are progressing at quicker rates compared with other pupils nationally and so beginning to catch up.
- Although in 2014 standards at the end of Key Stage 1 fell (compared with previous years) to broadly average, pupils still made good progress from starting points that were lower than the school typically sees. Leaders continue to take action for this cohort in Year 3 to ensure that they can reach their full potential by the time they leave.
- Provisional data for the previous Year 6 show that they did not make enough progress from their different starting points across Key Stage 2. However, nearly half of this period was spent in the former junior school at a time when it was subject to special measures. Rates of progress have significantly accelerated since then, although not quite enough to completely eradicate this legacy. That said, pupils did reach broadly average levels overall and they were adequately prepared for secondary education.

The early years provision is good

- Under strong leadership from the early years leader, the provision in Nursery and Reception Year has a number of significant strengths and continues to improve.
- When children begin, either in Nursery or Reception Year, their levels of skills, knowledge and understanding vary. Overall, the levels are often just below those typical for their age, especially for the proportion of children who do not have age-appropriate speech and language skills.
- No time is wasted in quickly identifying children's needs, including those who may have special educational needs, and helping children to catch up quickly wherever possible. Consequently, when the time comes, the majority of children have reached the level of development required to be thoroughly prepared for Year 1. High expectations for those whose skills are already more fully developed ensures they make good progress too, and in many individual areas, attainment is above national averages.
- The very well-organised, thoughtful and stimulating environments, both inside and out, enable children to develop their skills in a wide range of areas. Children confidently take these opportunities, selecting activities for themselves. Teachers carefully balance this with focused teaching to develop their early literacy and numeracy skills, ready for Year 1. Correctly identifying that in the past, children could have

made even more progress developing their early reading and writing skills, adults have made sure that these opportunities are now plentiful throughout the environment.

- An effective and competent adult team helps children to flourish. Children's positive behaviour indicates that they are happy and feel safe. Using their creative skills, adults provide the children with purposeful play opportunities, including daily opportunities for parents and carers and children to play together. Occasionally, adults miss opportunities to use questioning effectively to maximise children's learning as they play.

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	118509
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	447811

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	658
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Goad
Headteacher	Kirstine Boon
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2008
Telephone number	01634 863778
Fax number	01634 670991
Email address	office@swingate.medway.sch.uk

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