

Swanmead Community School

Ditton Street, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 0BL

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's drive and determination continues to raise the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Leaders have a clear, honest and objective understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Leaders promote a positive ethos where everyone is included. The school is successful in ensuring that current pupils progress well.
- Governors know the school well and are committed to its success. They hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account for the quality of provision.
- Pupils make good progress overall from their arrival in Year 5 to their departure in Year 8. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making accelerated progress. However, boys are still not progressing as quickly as girls.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is in line with other pupils. Leaders now have a comprehensive programme which supports these pupils both academically and pastorally.
- The standard of teaching in mathematics and performing arts is high. Pupils make good progress in these subjects.
- Pupils speak positively about their school experience because they feel supported and valued.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous, polite and respectful. In lessons, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils listen carefully to teachers about how to improve their work. They benefit significantly from the advice they receive, particularly in English, and they make good progress as a result.
- Pupils' moral and social education is a particular strength of the school. However, there are less opportunities for spiritual and cultural education.
- While teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, some pockets of weaker teaching remain where teachers do not have high enough expectations.
- Some parents commented they do not receive regular information, particularly on their child's progress.
- Attendance rates are broadly in line with national average. The school continues to work hard with those who are persistently absent.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders continue to tackle any remaining weak teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers set high expectations of what pupils, particularly boys, understand and can do.
- Improve communication with parents and carers to inform them of their child's progress and how they can support their child to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's determined approach to improve the standard of education is succeeding. Together with the governors and senior leaders, he maintains a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils' achievement and progress are rising.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use this to target precise points for improvement. They are proud of what they have achieved but know that there is more to do. Plans for future improvement are both challenging and achievable. They focus on the right areas and show the potential to maintain the strong trajectory of improvement.
- Leaders track pupils' progress and attendance carefully and use this information to target support for individual pupils and to raise the expectations of teachers. These strategies have a positive impact on pupils' attendance and progress.
- Relentless work to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils is proving effective. Current pupils make similar progress, or better, when compared to other pupils. The new 'Achievement for all' initiative is already having an impact on pupil engagement and progress.
- The headteacher manages the performance of teachers well. He sets targets that focus clearly on improving the quality of teaching and learning and improving pupils' outcomes. Robust actions are taken when staff have not achieved the standards required.
- The curriculum enables pupils of all abilities to have a good range of opportunities. The range of courses on offer enables pupils to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to progress to the next stage of their education.
- Middle leaders monitor the progress of pupils closely and intervene swiftly when pupils fall behind.
- The school successfully promotes pupils' moral and social skills through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. For example, the most able pupils speak enthusiastically about the impact of their work on resilience. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities that make a difference to their experience in school. There are not enough opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about spiritual and cultural ideas. Leaders are aware of this and are addressing this deficit.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funds they receive to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress from their starting points as the result of well-coordinated provision in which pupils' needs are addressed well.
- Parents, pupils, staff and governors are positive about the changes that leaders have made to the school recently. Typical of many comments stated on Parent View was, 'My child is very happy at the school,' and 'The opportunities offered far exceed those of a primary school.'

- Some parents feel they do not receive useful regular information on their child's progress in order to support them.

Governance of the school

- School leaders are supported by a strong governing body. The chairperson of the governing body is very experienced and, with other governors, ensures that the school continues to improve. Governors are driven by a passionate commitment to the school. They have integrity and care about the things that matter most.
- Governors know the school very well and talk confidently about its strengths and areas for development. They ensure that they receive appropriate information and reports from senior staff to inform them of the school's performance. They use these reports to ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account. They visit regularly during the working day to broaden and deepen their understanding of the school's work.
- Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used well to make a difference to targeted pupils. The additional funding is used to provide support for teaching and pupils' emotional well-being, as well as providing opportunities and resources that help pupils participate more fully in curriculum activities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are kept safe. They appreciate the strong safeguarding culture in place to protect pupils. Staff take their responsibilities very seriously. They are vigilant, well trained and know what to do if they become aware of a concern. All the required checks are made on new appointments and volunteers. Governors oversee the safeguarding arrangements diligently by checking systems and requesting updated information regularly.
- Leaders promote a respectful culture in the school so that pupils know they can talk openly to adults if they are worried about anything. Pupils report that they are not embarrassed to share concerns and they would happily speak to members of staff. They report that, on the rare occasion bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations and the school reinforces advice about dangers on numerous occasions. Recently, for example, a Year 6 personal, health and social education day was used to highlight online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- Pupils benefit from very positive relationships with staff because they are based on mutual respect. Teachers are keen to engage pupils with their learning and encourage participation. Pupils' contributions to discussions are valued and they enjoy their learning as a result.
- Pupils now make better progress and achieve well, particularly in English and mathematics, as a result of teachers planning well and using time effectively in lessons. Expectations of pupils' progress and behaviour continue to rise.

- Leaders use a number of baseline tests to confirm pupils' starting points. Progress is tracked carefully and robustly against baseline data and teachers use the information to plan carefully structured learning to meet the needs of the individuals they teach.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Staff provide pupils with effective support if they find work difficult. This helps pupils to progress and raise their self-esteem. Pupils speak positively about teachers' support in lessons, at lunchtimes and after school.
- Leaders have focused unrelentingly on the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment. They have concentrated initially in Years 5 and 6. The performance of teachers is checked rigorously and, where required, teachers have additional support to enable them to improve. This has led to improved teaching across most subjects and across these year groups. There is more to do in Years 7 and 8.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge to good effect, planning activities that meet the needs of most pupils and enabling them to make strong progress. However, a small number of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable because some teachers do not have high enough expectations.
- While teaching is typically good, there are occasions when the level of work set fails to challenge or stimulate pupils. Pupils tend to lose focus in these lessons and make relatively poor progress. Leaders are aware of this and are working with teachers to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately in all their lessons.
- The majority of pupils take pride in their work and correct errors in literacy. However, this is not consistent across the school and leads to some pupils' progress faltering.
- Teachers have embraced the focus of the school on numeracy. Leaders have supported numeracy work through professional development, regular input, 'maths Mondays' and close monitoring, and this is beginning to impact positively on pupil progress. Pupils read and debate confidently. However, the development of their writing skills across the curriculum is less well established particularly in Years 7 and 8.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are known as individuals and are cared for well. A well-developed and comprehensive network provides effective support for pupils when they need it.
- Throughout the school, staff are good role models for pupils. Consequently, pupils reflect these attitudes and behaviours, looking out for each other and being mutually supportive. Pupils develop important qualities and attributes, such as respect, open-mindedness and tolerance, which will help them flourish in modern Britain.
- Pupils are confident, courteous, respectful and articulate. They care about one another and their teachers. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely good, providing a harmonious constructive atmosphere.

- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay safe in the real and virtual worlds. Pupils know what to do and who to go to if they have a concern.
- Bullying is infrequent but is usually dealt with effectively. However, some pupils and parents are not always confident that incidents are resolved and information communicated effectively.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well, they listen carefully to teachers when they explain topics and they complete the tasks they are set. A few pupils lose concentration when teaching does not meet their needs. These pupils consequently make less progress.
- The school is a courteous and tolerant community. Pupils understand the importance of fundamental British values. They listen to each other's views respectfully and are welcoming of the views of those different from themselves. They challenge and debate beliefs in a respectful and tolerant manner. They are polite to adults and visitors and treat each other with good humour.
- The independent careers advice, guidance and education provided by the school is limited. As a result, pupils are unaware of the options for their next stage of education or for future employment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils take pride in their work and enjoy being challenged. The relationship between pupils and adults throughout the site promotes good learning. In a few incidents inspectors witnessed low-level disruption in lessons; this is usually the result of teaching not meeting the needs of the pupils and teachers not reinforcing high expectations.
- Leaders have introduced a new behaviour system. Pupils have a clear understanding of the system and believe it is managed well and having a positive effect on their behaviour.
- Pupils take pride in their school. They treat the school building with respect. Pupils also take pride in their own uniform and presentation of work in books. Pupils behave well out of lessons, around the school site at breaks and at lunchtimes. They socialise well with their friends. They move around the campus in a calm, respectful and orderly fashion.
- Pupils' conduct and manners are very good. They are polite and courteous and show respect for one another and their teachers.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and it is continuing to improve. Improving the attendance of pupils who are absent regularly continues to be a priority for the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils across the school are making good progress overall. There has been a marked improvement in the last year, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Boys are still lagging slightly behind girls but the difference is diminishing. Pupils generally make good progress because teaching is good in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, art and performing arts.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress throughout the school and in some cases exceeding the progress of other pupils. This has been a success story for the school over the last year. Disadvantaged pupils are now also achieving results comparable with all pupils in the school. This contrasts with 2017, when they made poor progress in all areas against the national average for all pupils. Their success is the result of a carefully crafted intervention programme which has placed the progress of disadvantaged pupils at the heart of every classroom.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making improved progress from their starting points. This is the result of well-targeted support and intervention so that teachers know exactly what pupils' needs are and how best to help them.
- A small number of Year 7 pupils in the school have fallen behind in English and mathematics and need to catch up. The school uses the Year 7 catch-up premium effectively in order to accelerate the progress of these pupils so that a significant percentage catch up to the expected achievement of their peers.
- There is an intensive focus on raising pupils' standards in numeracy across the school, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The impact of this on progress and achievement is already clear.
- In the last couple of years, pupils with average prior attainment have not always made sufficiently rapid progress. Leaders have ensured that there is now a concentration on the teaching and progress of these pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Improved teacher questioning reveals deeper understanding and secure knowledge leading to improved progress for this group.

School details

Unique reference number	123875
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10042695

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 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	285
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Marian Gamper
Headteacher	Mark Walker
Telephone number	01460 52431
Website	http://swanmeadschool.co.uk/
Email address	office@swanmead.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school is a small middle school.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6. The school was also designated as 'coasting' by the Department of Education on the basis of its key stage 2 results.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average and the number supported by an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- More than nine out of 10 pupils are of white British heritage. There are a few from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subject areas and across year groups. Many observations were jointly conducted with senior school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct entering and leaving the school premises and at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation, governing body minutes and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour, attendance, exclusion and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with the school education partner.
- Inspectors took account of 60 responses to the Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Gill Hickling, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Harris	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Butler	Ofsted Inspector

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