

INSPECTION REPORT

SWINFORD CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Swinford, Lutterworth

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120204

Headteacher: Judith Branston

Reporting inspector: Rashida Spencer
2766

Dates of inspection: 19th – 20th March 2001

Inspection number: 190767

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: School Lane
Swinford
Lutterworth
Leicestershire

Postcode: LE17 6BG

Telephone number: 01788 860404

Fax number: 01788 860404

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Knight

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|--------------|------------------|----------------------|
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Swinford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is attended by 78 boys and girls aged from four to eleven; the number on roll is now higher than at the time of the previous inspection and the school is heavily oversubscribed. The school is a much smaller than the average primary school and draws pupils from predominantly high socio-economic backgrounds. The school serves the four parishes of Catthorpe, Shawell Westrill and Starmore; a small minority come from outside this area. No pupils are entitled to free school meals. Two pupils speak English as an additional language; both are fluent in English. Nine pupils are on the special education needs register none of whom have statements, which is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. There is significant intake after the reception year and the school is increasingly being asked to accept pupils who have not succeeded in other larger schools. Sixteen children were in the reception year at the time of the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where standards are above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of the juniors. The school has sustained its progress since the last inspection. The pupils are highly motivated and well behaved. Teaching is good overall and the headteacher provides effective leadership. The school benefits significantly from governor, parental and local community support. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in reading are well above average and pupils make very good progress
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The headteacher provides good leadership.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.

What could be improved

- Consistency in the standards of presentation, spelling and handwriting.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in November 1996, the school has had a change of headteacher, the accommodation has been improved significantly and an additional teacher, special educational needs ancillary and classroom assistant have been appointed. The high standards evident at the last inspection have been sustained and the quality of teaching remains good. The school has made good improvement in tackling all of the issues identified in the previous report and has the capacity to improve further. The provision for information and communication technology is much improved and it is well incorporated into each subject area's planning. All strands of design and technology are now taught effectively and all are actively engaged in designing and evaluating. New units of work have been produced for gymnastics and music; staff have had further training and specialist teachers in music and games have been employed. All the actions taken have improved standards in these subjects.

STANDARDS

For schools with year groups of ten or fewer pupils the table that normally appears here is omitted. The results of the National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds over the last four years in English, mathematics and science indicate that standards in all three subjects are consistently well above average. Compared to similar schools standards in English are higher than those in mathematics but, overall, standards are well above those of similar schools. Results at eleven have stayed broadly in line, though well above, the rising national trend over the last four years. At seven the test results are even more impressive, showing that pupils consistently attain standards in the best five per cent of schools nationally in reading and mathematics, and standards are only slightly lower in writing. Against similar schools standards are well above average.

Inspectors found that standards in the present Year 6 are well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. There is a well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year's final year. Standards seen in Year 2 are well above average in both English and mathematics. Throughout the school standards in reading are higher than in other subjects. There are a few minor comparative weaknesses in pupils' attainment in handwriting and spelling. Children joining the school in the reception year do so with above average attainment, make good progress and, by the time they are ready to join Year 1, have exceeded the nationally defined learning goals for children at this stage of development. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the more able, achieve well. The school sets appropriate targets for performance in national tests. It has met past targets and is on course to meet the present targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Throughout the school pupils are attentive, highly motivated and keen to learn. They enjoy school and respond with enthusiasm to their lessons. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Pupils clearly understand and keep to the school rules. Bullying and poor behaviour are rare. There are no exclusions. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils are well mannered and clearly understand the need to be kind and supportive of one another. They get on well together and enjoy taking responsibility. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually. The number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time adversely affects the level of attendance. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged up to 5 years | aged 5-7 years | aged 7-11 years |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | Good |

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good. In the lessons seen, 36 per cent were very good, 46 per cent good and 18 per cent satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Throughout the school the teaching of reading is very good with very good support provided by parents. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught and teachers successfully encourage pupils to apply these skills in other subjects. Teaching of basic handwriting skills lacks consistency. Very good teaching was observed in the middle years in science and design and technology. Strengths in the teaching include good preparation and organisation of resources, lesson objectives are shared at the beginning of the lesson and teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Teachers' questioning skills are well developed and they give very effective support on a one-to-one basis. Whilst teachers mark pupils' books regularly, their comments do not always make it clear how pupils can further improve their work. Pupils are keen to learn and the pace of lessons is generally good. In the large majority of lesson seen the needs of all pupils were well met, though in a few lessons higher attainers were not always fully challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and they make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are suitably emphasised. Planning generally meets the needs of pupils of different ages in the same class. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. The school provides effective support for the pupils. Individual education plans are carefully written and the support given is effective. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. Christian values are clearly expressed. The school provides an understanding of a culturally diverse society well. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and understand what it means to be a good citizen. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | This is a very caring school in which each pupil feels valued. Staff track progress of individual pupils and know each pupil's strengths and weaknesses very well. |

All requirements regarding the curriculum are met. Additionally, the school offers Latin and French. Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that better use could be made of the first half hour of the day. The school focuses strongly on raising pupils' self-esteem through celebrating their achievements in assembly and in displaying their work attractively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The school is well led. There is considerable drive and energy to secure the best learning environment for the pupils and adults. The school has improved its processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. The governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. The recent assignment of specific responsibility for a subject/aspect provides a good basis for the governors to act as a 'critical friend'. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school's self-evaluation process is effective. Tracking of pupils' academic progress is developing well. The school's identification of some weaknesses in its school development planning is accurate. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. Funds are well targeted and monies are well managed and monitored. The school approaches best value principles sensibly. |

The headteacher is providing a clear direction for the school. The current school development plan priorities are not sufficiently focused on raising academic standards but new plans will take into account clear criteria for monitoring and specifying measurable outcomes linked to performance measures. National funding is used well to support a range of school initiatives. Best value principles are applied pragmatically and sensibly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching is good• The school is approachable• Pupils' behaviour is very good.• Support for special educational needs is good• Pupils are encouraged to participate fully in all activities.• Staff show genuine concern for each pupil. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better communication.• The provision for extra-curricular activities.• Teachers' guidance on pupils' selection of reading books. |

The inspection team endorses the positive views of the parents. Considering it is a small school, it provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school carries out its own survey of parents and demonstrates clearly that it responds constructively to their comments. Nevertheless, the school could explore more creatively how it can communicate more effectively with parents. There is a marked improvement in the overall percentage of parents who are satisfied compared with the last inspection's questionnaire.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards in reading are well above average and pupils make very good progress.

1. The standard of pupils' reading is very high across the school and all pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs. Since the last inspection the school has successfully implemented the National Literacy Strategy. This has enabled it to at least keep pace with the national pattern of improvement in standards. In the national tests for reading at seven the school has been in the top five per cent of school nationally for the last four years. The school's results in 2000 for eleven-years-olds in English were in the top five per cent nationally and in the top five per cent of schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In last year's test two-thirds of eleven-year-olds reached the higher Level 5 in English.
2. Reading is a strength at all ages from reception age children, who could read back the sentences they had written, to Year 6 pupils who read a demanding text on Exodus from the Bible in assembly. Pupils command a wide range of vocabulary in both the infants and the juniors and read fluently with expression and enjoyment. By the age of seven most pupils are able to break down new words and often have good skills in building words from the sounds that letters make. They know how to use the contents and index page and they are able to access a dictionary quickly and accurately. By the age of eleven, most pupils have made very good progress. Higher attainers' choice of reading includes books such as 'The Hobbit' and 'Lord of the Flies'. They can explain why they like certain authors, discuss characters and compare authors' approaches to developing central characters. Pupils express their opinions clearly and argue their preference, for example a pupil from Year 6 was able to put forward a forceful argument for disliking 'Harry Potter'! Their reading includes a wide range of text, non-fiction and poetry. A number of pupils have access to a CD-ROM at home and enjoy carrying out research. All enjoy selecting books from the library in Rugby and Lutterworth.
3. From the reading age of ten pupils are encouraged to read by having a free choice of reading books. Whilst most pupils can access the correct levels of the books, others may need more assistance in selection. Home/school reading diaries make a positive contribution to the high standards but, though there are regular entries in the book both by the parents and the staff, some diaries could be better used as tools for improvement by providing a sharper and perhaps more critical appraisal of strengths and weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good.

4. The overall quality of teaching is good. Reception age pupils are taught well. Group work is well organised and the classroom assistant is appropriately briefed and was therefore able to give effective support to the younger pupils. Throughout the school lessons are usually structured carefully and, in most cases, include objectives for pupils' learning. In the most effective teaching the objectives are very clearly shared with the pupils, thereby giving the lesson clear purpose and direction. For example, in a design and technology lesson on designing and making sandwiches in Year 3/4 pupils were clear that they had to explain their preferences, explain customer satisfaction and make decisions about a range of fillings. Clear instructions and good preparation led the pupils to make a prompt and enthusiastic start to their work. In a few lessons objectives were not always sufficiently clear for a mixed-age classes.
5. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is secure. They use appropriate terminology and vocabulary, hence Year 2 pupils, who were reading a text on 'Born to be a Butterfly', were introduced to new words, such as 'pupa', and the teacher used the correct term to explain how

a butterfly 'emerged' from a pupa. Pupils' learning is greatly assisted by the teachers' generally high expectations. Most teachers have at least a sound knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and teaching of basic skills is generally good despite a lack of consistency in the teaching of spelling, handwriting and written presentation. Whilst the pace of lessons is usually brisk, it is more than brisk in Years 3/4. This helps to ensure the effective use of available time, gives a sense of purpose to activities and accelerates pupils' learning.

6. One of the important strengths of the school is that the teachers and other adults know pupils well. Pupils are assessed on entry to the school and their progress is monitored thoroughly. Teachers are using assessment results to track individual pupil's progress though there is some evidence that short and medium-term plans are not always subsequently amended to take account of such analysis. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and write comments, which are nearly always positive, but they do not always set new targets or targets for improving pupils' performance or give them a clear idea of why they have made errors and how they can improve them. Relationships with pupils are very good and teachers give good one-to-one support. There is a consistent pattern of homework, which ranges from regular reading for all pupils to some extended tasks for the oldest pupils.

The headteacher provides good leadership

7. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school. She has effectively led the staff and governors to tackle the issues identified in the last inspection. Her tenacity and drive to tackle bureaucratic barriers has resulted in improving the quality of accommodation for the pupils and adults. Consequently, the school's internal and external learning environment is attractive and is making a positive impact on the standards achieved and on the well being of the whole community. The school is popular and the number on the roll has been increasing. There are instances of parents registering pupils six months after their birth. Though four days a week of class teaching combined with the leadership of five subjects leaves her with little time for other management responsibilities, the headteacher leads the school well. However, despite this very heavy workload, she manages all aspects of the school effectively and has built a strong ethos of good teamwork. With additional new staff members, there is a need for further sharing of management tasks.
8. Almost all of the questionnaires returned strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the school is well led and managed. Governors concur with this judgement. Parents' only reservation related to the speed and effectiveness of the school's response to suggestions and complaints. The headteacher and staff are aware of this and are exploring better ways of communication.
9. The school's self-evaluation process is both systematic and effective. The monitoring of teaching is carried out by the headteacher for appraisal purposes. Though the headteacher has not adopted a formal policy for monitoring the quality of teaching, she knows teachers' overall strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and detailed records of pupils' reading ages are kept. In January each year every child from Year 2 upwards takes a Burt reading test and a Vernon spelling test. The results are analysed to monitor the progress of both individuals and groups. In the Spring term all pupils take an NFER mathematics test as well as the NFER reading test. Analyses of these tests give the headteacher and staff useful data on how each cohort is progressing year by year. The headteacher's monitoring of pupils' progress in English and mathematics is thorough and has contributed to the raising of standards.
10. The current school development plan, whilst it clearly identifies and defines its priorities, is not sufficiently focused on raising standards and it lacks clear monitoring criteria and measurable outcomes. The headteacher, with the help of the local authority link advisor, is reviewing the format of the new strategic development plan.

11. The principle of best value is applied sensibly. Financial and other resources are managed efficiently and the governing body as a whole keeps a check on the spending of the school. The headteacher's entrepreneurial skills are well applied to secure for the school a very good range of equipment.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.

12. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are very keen to come to school and are highly motivated and interested in their work. They work very well independently, confident enough to ask questions if they need further explanation and not afraid to make mistakes. Most listen attentively. They enjoy very good co-operative relationships with each other and with adults which facilitate their learning.
13. Examples of pupils' positive attitudes were observed in all parts of the school. Reception age pupils followed the story 'The Bear under the Tree' eagerly and when the teacher did not give the ending their enthusiasm to conclude the story by providing their own ending was infectious. In a Year 3 lesson on design and technology, pupils focused very well on making their sandwiches, using a range of fillings. Pupils again demonstrated how precisely they can apply their language skills by describing the texture, taste and smell of bread. This was a lively lesson in which pupils were very positively engaged and much new learning took place because of very good teaching. Again, in a Year 3/4 science lesson, pupils showed they could concentrate, make accurate observations and engage in a lively discussion about the speed and source of light. In a Year 6 literacy lesson pupils were excited by the subject and highly motivated to do well.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards of written presentation, spelling and handwriting

14. Overall, pupils' handwriting is legible and their spelling is of at least a satisfactory standard throughout the school. However, compared to other areas of English standards in these areas are lower than they should be. There is no consistent application of a handwriting scheme, resulting in a mix of styles with a number of pupils unable to form letters in both upper and lower case correctly. Letters are not joined up regularly and older pupils do not use ink pens regularly, which may impede their progress in secondary schools where they will have to make a rapid adjustment to using ink regularly. Teachers' expectations for the presentation of written work are insufficiently high. Too much written work is produced that is untidy and basic ideas about good presentation are insufficiently emphasised.
15. Though the basic skills promoted through the National Literacy Strategy are generally taught well and sometimes very well, approaches to the teaching of spelling need strengthening. Whilst pupils have a wide range of vocabulary and use it confidently, there are too many errors in spelling. Regular spelling tests and checks ensure that pupils learn words continuously. However, a minority of pupils still make too many spelling errors in their extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to correct their spellings but practice does not appear to be consistently undertaken in all classes.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

16. To further improve its high standards the headteacher, staff and governors should:

*Improve standards of spelling, handwriting and written presentation to the high standards reached in other aspects of English by:

- raising expectations of the quality and consistency of handwriting;
- always insisting that written work be clearly and neatly presented;
- placing a stronger emphasis on the need for correct spelling.

(paragraphs 14-15)

*** Indicates that the school is aware of the issue and has responded to it in its school development plan**

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 11 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 19 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 36 | 46 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

| | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 78 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 9 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 2 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 3 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 3 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.1 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | |
| Black – African heritage | |
| Black – other | |
| Indian | |
| Pakistani | |
| Bangladeshi | |
| Chinese | |
| White | 76 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 2 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 4.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 15.9 |
| Average class size | 15.5 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 3 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 31 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 0 | 0 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 164,697 |
| Total expenditure | 162,461 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,425 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 903 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 3,139 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 70 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 42 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 67 | 31 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 62 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 66 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 50 | 38 | 5 | 0 | 7 |
| The teaching is good. | 81 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 55 | 36 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 69 | 29 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 62 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 48 | 43 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 55 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 55 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 16 | 43 | 29 | 0 | 12 |

Other issues raised by parents

Better communication.

The provision for extra-curricular activities.

Monitoring of pupils' reading.