



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

**Inspection report**  
**Swain House Primary School**

**Bradford Education Authority**

Dates of inspection: 15-16 July 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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## Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Swain House Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Miss D Rowbotham
Address of school:	Radcliffe Avenue Bradford West Yorkshire BD2 1JL
Telephone:	01274 639049
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr N Traynor
Local education authority area:	Bradford
Unique reference number:	107220
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs S Øyen HMI
Dates of inspection:	15-16 July 2004

## Introduction

1. Swain House Primary School is situated to the north-east of Bradford in an area of mixed local authority and private housing. Most of the pupils are of white British heritage. There are 42 pupils who speak English as an additional language but none are in the early stages of learning the language. Although the number on roll has fallen in the last few years, the school is larger than average with 390 pupils including 71 who attend either the morning or the afternoon session in the nursery. Seventeen per cent of pupils, similar to the national average, are eligible for free school meals. There are 35 pupils who have been identified by the school as having special educational needs; eight pupils, four of whom are in Year 6, have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils' attainment on entry to the nursery is generally lower than expected for their age.
2. The school was inspected in February 2003 as part of the programme to monitor the progress of schools that have been identified as having serious weaknesses. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and Swain House was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.
3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of February 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In July 2004 two HMI returned to inspect the school, assessing the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of February 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

## Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:
    - standards have risen significantly in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 where the majority of pupils make good progress and are working at the levels expected for their ages. Although standards are higher at Key Stage 2 than two years ago, they are still not as high as they should be because of the variation in the pupils' progress between classes and year groups. Some Key Stage 2 pupils have made good progress in the last year, especially in Year 6, but many continue to underachieve in lessons and over time;
    - the pupils' attitudes to learning have improved and are now very good overall. There is a strong work ethic throughout the school. From their start in the nursery, the pupils enjoy learning; they listen carefully, concentrate hard and often show a good degree of perseverance. The pupils co-operate sensibly with others and behave well even when the pace of lessons slows. At times, their conduct is exemplary;
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- the quality of teaching has improved greatly and is good overall. While the strongest and most consistent teaching is in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, there is good teaching in all year groups. However, there are continuing inconsistencies at Key Stage 2; changes in staffing have disrupted the pupils' learning. All the teachers have worked hard to improve their skills and knowledge. Common strengths in the teaching were the conscientious planning and preparation of lessons, good teamwork between teachers and support staff, and effective strategies to manage the pupils. In the best lessons, the teaching was enthusiastic, brisk and purposeful with touches of flair;
  - in literacy and mathematics, the school sets challenging targets for the pupils in all year groups because it has developed effective systems to track their progress. In science and other subjects, the systems are not as refined and, too often, the teachers do not expect enough of the pupils, particularly those whose attainment is higher;
  - in the nursery and the reception year, the staff are creative in their use of play and practical experiences to foster the pupils' learning. In all year groups there is a strong emphasis on the systematic development of the pupils' skills in reading, writing and number. This is not as evident in other subjects;
  - the school is orderly and well organised. All the staff take time and care to create vibrant, eye-catching displays to stimulate the pupils' interest and to celebrate their achievements;
  - the resilience, steely determination and firm direction of the headteacher have been key factors in building the impetus to improve. She has successfully encouraged all who work in the school to use their skills and talents. The deputy headteacher has been very effective in coaching others and in developing rigorous monitoring systems and assessment procedures. The senior managers have a good understanding of their responsibilities in raising standards. Subject leaders are starting to take an active role in planning programmes of improvement but lack expertise in using all available information to identify the most salient priorities to raise standards. The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account. As a result, the school is a strong, supportive community that is very well led and managed and has good capacity to improve further;
  - since the school became subject to special measures, Education Bradford has provided much effective support in developing the quality of teaching, the curriculum and management.

## Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards and minimise underachievement, especially at Key Stage 2;

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- improve the quality of teaching to that of the best in the school;
  - strengthen the effectiveness of the key stage and subject managers in leading programmes of improvement;
  - make rigorous use of the information from monitoring and evaluation to determine specific priorities for development.

## Inspection findings

### Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards are good at Key Stage 1 but low at Key Stage 2 where there is a legacy of low attainment and underachievement. There has been a rise in standards at Key Stage 2 over the last sixteen months because of much focused teaching and an upturn in the culture of learning, especially for the older pupils. The school's results at both key stages in the 2004 national tests are better than in 2002 and 2003. The good performance of the higher-attaining pupils has lifted standards, most markedly at Key Stage 1 but also at Key Stage 2. However, standards at Key Stage 2 are not as high as they should be, because too many pupils underachieve.

8. The pupils in the nursery and reception year make good progress, often from a low start. Although a minority of the reception-year pupils still have some way to go to reach the level expected for their age, many have reached and exceeded it, especially in personal and social development, reading, writing and number. These pupils write independently and confidently; they use their knowledge of letters and sounds to spell simple words and they punctuate sentences correctly. They solve simple calculations and record their work using mathematical symbols. Their strong profile of attainment indicates good potential for standards to rise further at Key Stage 1.

9. The good rise in standards at Key Stage 1 has set the tone and expectations for attainment at Key Stage 2 in the years ahead. In the national tests at Key Stage 1 in 2004, the school came close to its targets for attainment at Level 2, the standard expected at the end of Year 2, and far exceeded them for attainment at the higher Level 3 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. There was a marked increase in the proportion of pupils who attained the sub-level 2b and above in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with similar schools in 2003, Swain House did very well.

10. The pupils at Key Stage 1 have made good progress because of strong teaching and the systematic development of their skills in reading, writing, number and science. Pupils' progress at Key Stage 2 has been much more variable. Although the pupils in some classes have progressed well, especially in Year 6, too many have made erratic, slow or minimal progress. Staffing changes and inconsistencies in teaching have disrupted the learning of many pupils who have not made enough progress to close the gaps arising from weak provision in the past. There are wide disparities in attainment in each year group and between different classes in the same year group, and too many pupils have not attained the levels expected for their ages. This is most evident in writing and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5. A good proportion of the Year 2 pupils work at levels higher than many pupils in these year groups.

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11. Standards in English vary. The pupils' listening skills are generally good. Most pupils listened attentively and appreciatively but often had difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly and succinctly. In lessons, a significant proportion found it hard to justify and explain their thinking but fared better when given time to discuss their answers with a partner. The recent focus on drama and role-play has helped to develop the pupils' confidence and skills in speaking before an audience.

12. In the school as a whole, reading standards are lower than in writing but there is considerable variation between the year groups. The Year 2 pupils read enthusiastically and with good expression. They knew how to use an index and a contents page and recognised different stylistic features. In contrast, too many pupils at lower Key Stage 2 had a narrow range of reading skills. In Year 6, the pupils read confidently but, apart from the higher-attaining pupils, lacked competence in exploring the deeper meaning of text.

13. Standards have risen in writing and high attainment is starting to show, particularly at Key Stage 1. Many Year 2 pupils had written long, lively pieces in neat, joined handwriting with accurate spellings and correct punctuation. At Key Stage 2, the picture is patchy. Many pupils wrote slowly and immaturely. The recent change in the school's handwriting style has led to some improvement in presentation. However, too many pupils struggled to plan and organise their writing. They often relied heavily on prompts from the adults. "The Big Write" this term boosted the Year 6 pupils' skills in drafting and structuring stories, arguments and information leaflets. Just over half of them attained Level 4, as expected for their age, in the national tests.

14. In mathematics, the pupils in Years 2 and 6 knew how to follow given procedures but were often hesitant in deciding for themselves which to use when solving problems. In all year groups, too few pupils had quick recall of key number facts. Many average and lower-attaining pupils relied on their fingers to count. The lower-attaining pupils also needed many prompts from the adults to apply their knowledge and to see relationships between numbers and operations. Despite improvements in the results in the national tests, these aspects depress standards at Key Stage 2.

15. Standards are rising in science although they are low in comparison with the national picture at Key Stage 2. The work to develop the pupils' investigative skills is starting to pay off. In all year groups, the pupils showed an understanding of fair testing and made sensible predictions. The pupils in Year 1, having tested different materials, went on to suggest how they could be used to deaden sound. At Key Stage 2, too many pupils have limited understanding of scientific terms and concepts.

### **The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

16. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. They were at least satisfactory in all but one of the lessons, very good in eleven and outstanding in one. This substantial improvement since the inspection of 2003 reflects the heightened positive culture in the school. There have been no exclusions since September 2002.

17. The pupils are keen to learn, willing to please and ready to work hard. Relationships are very good. Boys and girls from different faiths and cultures get on well. The frequent opportunities for the pupils to work with a partner are helping to foster a beneficial spirit of co-operation and collaboration. In the majority of lessons, the pupils' enthusiasm was harnessed well and they learnt with clear enjoyment. For example, the pupils in Year 5



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spontaneously applauded their teacher's reading of a poem and became very involved in composing their own. The Year 6 pupils approached their work with maturity; they strove to do their best for their teachers. The pupils' behaviour in classrooms, playgrounds and around the school is usually very good. In assemblies, it is often exemplary. Only when the pace of lessons was slow, or when there was too little to engage them, did the pupils show growing signs of restlessness and inappropriate behaviour.

18. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has many good features. It is particularly effective in promoting good moral and social attitudes. The school fosters well the pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility; for example, the learning mentors lead sessions to build the pupils' self-confidence and older pupils act as 'buddies' to younger pupils to help them with reading and writing. Some also carry out minor administrative tasks such as photocopying. The pupils value the reward system of house points, awards and certificates; however, there is scope for a wider range of rewards and sanctions.

19. The school makes very effective use of assemblies and display boards in classes and public spaces to celebrate the pupils' achievements. The administrative staff use their talents well to create eye-catching, interactive displays; examples include a residential visit made by Key Stage 2 pupils, England's success in winning the world cup in rugby and the forthcoming Olympic Games. A recent drama production, 'First Kids in Space', enhanced the otherwise limited range of extracurricular activities, which includes a breakfast club and sports coaching.

20. At 94.8 per cent, attendance is close to the national median. The level of unauthorised absence is low. The school is working hard to dissuade parents from taking holidays in term time, one of the main causes of authorised absence.

### **The quality of education**

21. The quality of teaching is good; it has improved greatly since February 2003 because of careful recruitment, effective programmes of professional development and the positive willingness of teachers and support staff to improve their skills and knowledge. The teaching was outstanding in one lesson, very good in three, good in seven, satisfactory in nine and unsatisfactory in one. The quality of the pupils' learning closely mirrored the teaching although there was one lesson where the learning lagged behind.

22. Although the strongest and most consistent teaching was in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, there were examples of good teaching in all year groups. There were also effective aspects in all lessons. The teachers and support staff worked well together and all were clear about the purpose of the lesson. There were many examples of the adults' use of carefully planned, practical activities to interest, engage and challenge the pupils. The teachers have gained in confidence in using drama, particularly to prompt the pupils' writing. Touches of flair have started to emerge as the teachers see the beneficial impact of their ideas on the pupils' learning. Common features of the most effective teaching were: the adults' emphasis on relevant vocabulary; their good skills in questioning the pupils; the reiteration of appropriate strategies and the high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and work rate. This teaching was often lively and the adults worked hard to ensure that the higher and lower-attaining pupils took part.

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23. There are continuing inconsistencies at Key Stage 2 especially in Years 3, 4 and 5 where there have been several changes of teacher and slower progress in establishing effective practices. There are also differences in the teaching of subjects; for example, the teaching of mathematics at Key Stage 1 is not as effective as that of English. Throughout the school, but more especially at Key Stage 2, common failings were: the teachers' assumption that the pupils understood; slow pace; the loss of impetus when the pupils worked on mundane tasks and the poor use of the plenary session at the end of lessons to review what the pupils had learnt. The pedestrian start to many lessons in mathematics did not help to quicken the pupils' recall of mathematical facts.

24. The staff have given much thought and time to creating displays in the classrooms to catch the pupils' interest, to celebrate their achievements and to support their learning in different subjects. In the nursery and reception classes, the staff are skilful at setting up role-play areas and interactive scenes to replicate story events. They have consistent and comprehensive procedures to track the pupils' progress and they make effective use of photographs and samples of work to complement their observational notes. At Key Stages 1 and 2, there are effective systems to track the pupils' achievements and to set targets for their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. In science and other subjects, such systems are in the early stages of development. The teachers' marking has not referred enough to the pupils' targets but changes trialled this term in Year 3 have proved effective in helping the pupils to track their own progress.

25. The implementation of a schedule of assessments has given the school a wealth of data. The senior managers have used the results from tests to pinpoint weaknesses in the curriculum and to compare the pupils' attainment with the targets set for them. For the first time, the school has a complete profile of attainment in writing, reading and mathematics and is able to identify those pupils who have not made enough progress as well as those who have achieved well. It has also been able to evaluate the effectiveness of support programmes in reading and writing and to decide how best to use such programmes next year.

### **Leadership and management**

26. The quality of leadership and management has strengthened significantly at all levels. That of the headteacher and most senior managers is very good. The headteacher responded positively to the need to change, readily acted on advice and has shown steely determination and drive in implementing the action plan. Despite setbacks because of staff absence, delays in filling posts and slow progress in some aspects, she has sustained high expectations of the staff and pupils. Her encouragement of others to use and develop their skills has heightened staff morale and developed a tangible, corporate spirit of purpose. The responsibilities and accountabilities of the senior managers are clear. The strong partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher has been a catalyst in the growing impetus of improvement. The draft development plan for the next three years sets out relevant priorities arising from an evaluation of the school's performance this year. It currently lacks clear, measurable success criteria and objectives.

27. The deputy headteacher has balanced well a heavy workload of teaching and management responsibilities. She has developed expertise in coaching others and taken the lead role in developing the work of the support staff. She has developed effective systems to assess and track the pupils' progress and played a key part in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. With support from the LEA, the co-ordinator for English has made

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substantial gains in leading programmes of improvement. Changes in staffing and periods of absence have limited the impact of similar programmes for mathematics and science. The key stage leaders and subject leaders have begun to take a more prominent leadership role.

28. The governing body is holding the school to account and fulfils its responsibilities. The chair of governors has supported and challenged the headteacher and other senior managers, and has a good understanding of the factors that have affected the school's progress. The finance committee, aware of the pending reduction in the budget because of the falling school roll, has sought ways to reduce costs and to tap into other sources of funding. The governors have appointed three newly qualified teachers and the school will start the new academic year with a full complement of permanent staff.

29. In the four terms since the school became subject to special measures, Education Bradford has provided a good programme of support, especially in developing the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage and the teaching in literacy, numeracy and science. The conscientious, thorough and realistic approach of the school's contact officer has been highly beneficial. She has ensured that the support met the school's needs. Last term, the School Improvement Partnership Board, formed by the DfES and Education Bradford, funded the release of subject leaders from class work to begin programmes of improvement. The school is now in a healthy position to lead its own programme to refine systems and practices.

### **Implementation of the action plan**

30. The inspection report of February 2003 required the school to address four key issues. These related to: raising standards particularly in English, mathematics and science; improving the teaching; clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior managers; and making further use of monitoring to set the agenda for improvement. The school has followed the action plan and made good progress in strengthening the leadership and management and in improving the quality of teaching. There has been reasonable progress in the other two aspects.

31. The school has acted on the specialist help and guidance of consultants and advisory teachers. It has appointed teachers with experience and management expertise, and provided support for individual teachers to help them to improve. Although the impact has been variable at Key Stage 2, there have been significant improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning. Much tighter systems to assess the pupils' attainment have given the staff a clearer picture of where to focus their teaching. The teachers have raised their expectations of what the pupils can do and standards have started to rise.

32. There have been several changes in the leadership team over the four terms and not all the senior managers are equally effective or skilled in leading programmes of improvement. Nevertheless, all are clear about their roles and responsibilities as key stage and subject leaders. The influential work of the English co-ordinator and the deputy headteacher provides a good model for others.

33. The school has now a sound, realistic picture of its performance from a wide range of evidence gained through monitoring and testing. Key staff have improved in their ability to analyse the data and to decide where the school needs to take action.

## **Appendix – Information about the inspection**

The school was inspected under section 10 of the Schools Inspection Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was identified as having serious weaknesses.

The school was visited by HMI and an Additional Inspector in February 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the report of the section 10 inspection. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the Schools Inspection Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. It was critical of many aspects of the school's work and in accordance with the Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in July and December 2003, and in March 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the report of the section 3 inspection.

In July 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days to check the progress being made. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996.

During the inspection, 21 lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff and the chair of the governing body and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.