

Swanage First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113677
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	289691
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Grover
Headteacher	Roger Withey
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002
School address	Mount Scar Swanage BH19 2EY
Telephone number	01929 422424
Fax number	01929 426652

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Inspection number	289691

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Swanage First School is a smaller than average school. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which gives pupils a very high quality, all-round education. Parents wholeheartedly endorse this, making comments such as 'I feel that my son has made good academic progress but more importantly to me he has gained hugely in confidence, both emotionally and socially'. The first-class leadership and management of the headteacher are at the heart of the school's continuing success. With the able support of the senior leadership team, he has nurtured and developed a team of exceptionally dedicated, enthusiastic and talented staff. Every adult in the school is committed to providing each child with the best possible education.

Pupils' academic achievement is outstanding. Children quickly settle into the Reception class and all make good progress from a broadly average level of attainment on entry. This good progress is built on successfully and accelerates even further in Years 1 and 2, with the result that standards by the end of Year 2 have been significantly above national averages in each of the last five years. This very good progress continues in Years 3 and 4 so that, by the time pupils leave the school for middle school at the age of nine, standards are significantly above expected levels. Standards in writing, although not as exceptionally high as in reading and mathematics, have improved significantly and are now above national averages.

Outstanding teaching and the excellent curriculum are key factors in pupils' excellent all-round development. This is a school where pupils really want to learn and relish the challenges given to them to do as well as they possibly can. Attendance levels are average. Pupils are greeted warmly by staff as they arrive each morning promptly and ready for the new day, and they begin each day with a lively 'Wake and Shake' activity joined by staff and parents, but opportunities are missed to reward good attendance and discourage holidays in term time.

Pupils behave outstandingly well in and around the school. Their personal development is outstanding and is testimony to the exceptional care, guidance and support they are given, both personally and academically. As a result, pupils are prepared very well, socially, emotionally and academically, for their future roles in society. They are very aware of the importance of eating healthy food, keeping fit and staying safe. Through the school council and open, honest relationships with everyone, pupils feel free to express their views. The school has excellent systems for tracking individual pupils' progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and assessment in other subjects is much more rigorous than typically found. The improvements since the last inspection and continuing high standards demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to develop even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the school's systems and strategies designed to improve attendance further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Under excellent leadership, overall standards have remained significantly above the national average since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is excellent. From broadly average attainment on entry, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. This good progress is built on successfully and accelerates even further in Years 1 and 2 so that by the end of Year 2 standards are significantly above national averages. This very good progress continues in

Years 3 and 4 and, by the time pupils leave the school for middle school, standards are significantly above those expected for their age. All groups of pupils do well. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), which was an issue at the time of the last inspection, have been improved significantly and are now above average throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy their lessons and this is clearly reflected in their very positive attitudes and extremely good behaviour. Pupils confirm that bullying is rare and, if and when it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. They talk about regular homework providing a good challenge and how their self-assessment is helping them to move to the next stages of learning. They make an active and positive contribution to both the school and the wider community, organising very successful charity events such as the recent 'Digit Diner'. Pupils are confident that if they share their ideas during school council meetings these will be considered and acted upon if at all possible. Pupils feel safe and know what to do if they are upset. The high take-up of sport, coupled with healthy snacks and freely available water, contribute exceptionally well to pupils' knowledge of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Although the school has had some success in improving its attendance figures, they are still only average because families take holidays in term time and because opportunities are missed to celebrate good attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is outstanding. Pupils' very high levels of achievement and excellent team working skills prepare them very well for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and an interesting and appropriate curriculum, clearly linked to children's early learning goals, is provided both indoors and outdoors. Teachers throughout the school have very good classroom management skills and very good relationships are a feature of all lessons. One parent wrote, 'All my son's teachers have made each year so special that he never wants to go on holiday!' Work is very well matched to pupils' abilities. Lessons are very well planned and progress is monitored regularly so that pupils are helped to build on what they have learnt before. Marking is very good and provides pupils with clear guidance about how well they have done and what they could do to improve. All lessons are conducted at a lively pace, with varied activities that hold pupils' interest and ensure that they get a lot done. Pupils benefit significantly from the support of highly experienced teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum engages pupils very well and provides well for all aspects of their learning. It caters very well for the needs of individuals, providing very effective additional group 'booster' or 'catch up' activities based on the rigorous assessment procedures. The curriculum for Foundation Stage children is clearly linked to the recommended early learning goals. There is good provision for both indoor and outdoor activities, which is a clear improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are provided with a wide range of extra-curricular activities which significantly enrich their learning. A strength of the curriculum is the very good use of the very

rich school environment. Regular, exciting and stimulating educational visits and visitors, such as the recent visit from a 'very strict' 'Victorian headteacher', provide excellent 'hands on' experiences for pupils which they talk about excitedly weeks after the event. ICT provision has been significantly improved, so that it now pervades all areas of the curriculum and the work produced is of a very high standard. The school is making very good use of a music specialist to provide a high standard of music throughout the school which results in well appreciated concerts in the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' emotional well-being is supported strongly through the personal, social and emotional programme. The arrangements for ensuring health, safety and welfare are outstanding, with risk assessments carried out regularly for the various activities around the school. Child protection procedures and safeguarding arrangements are secure. The school has excellent systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress on a termly basis and these extremely rigorous procedures enable staff to provide very well for each pupil. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure early identification and intervention for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This results in their excellent progress. Support staff are very well deployed according to identified need. Pupils are given clear targets and success criteria for each stage of their learning, so they are aware of the next steps that they need to take in order to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Sustained outstanding leadership and management have ensured Swanage First School's distinctive ethos and the consistently excellent progress made by different groups of pupils over a number of years. The headteacher's enthusiastic leadership, dedication and direction ensure that no stone is left unturned in giving the pupils the very best provision. The great strengths of the school are the excellent teamwork and the determination to ensure that all pupils succeed. Responsibility is delegated wisely. The headteacher is very well supported by the senior leadership team and subject coordinators. All staff share the very clear vision and feel fully involved in the leadership and management of the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning and other areas of the school's work is regular, extremely rigorous and shared, ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities. Very good links with parents and outside institutions are a distinctive feature and add significantly to the pupils' opportunities. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, one writing, 'The very good leadership by the headteacher and the strong teaching have given our son an excellent start to his education'. Governors are very capable and committed, using a wide range of approaches to inform their decision-making. They make an outstanding contribution to the welfare of the pupils by sponsoring a class of pupils from Reception and staying with the same class to Year 4 so that they know pupils very well and have a very good understanding of the curriculum and the quality of teaching in the school. Although, in some of its judgements about its own effectiveness, the school is unnecessarily modest, the governing body and the headteacher have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work steadfastly to improve pupils' opportunities through the very comprehensive improvement plan.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swanage First School, Swanage, BH19 2EY

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleague and I very much enjoyed our visit.

Swanage First is an outstanding school. You told us that you really like school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. We agree with you. Your behaviour is excellent and you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. Your headteacher and staff enable you to learn really well and enjoy your lessons. Your teachers are very skilled at providing you with really interesting activities and in helping you all to make very good progress. As a result, you reach very high standards in English, mathematics and science. All staff make sure you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe and you do this very well.

We have asked your school to do something to make it even better, and this is something that you can certainly help with. We have asked the school to make even more efforts to try to improve your attendance so that more of you attend every session of the school year.

We are confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours faithfully

Clive Lewis Lead inspector