

Swinton Queen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106879
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309254
Inspection date	30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Myerscough
Headteacher	Mrs S Joyce
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Queen Street Swinton Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 8NE
Telephone number	01709 570438
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement; personal development and well-being; and the effectiveness of different levels of leadership and management throughout the school. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, observation of the school at work, analysis of pupils' work, discussions with the staff, pupils and governors, as well as the scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments of such aspects, as given in the self-evaluation form, were not justified.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves a socially and economically mixed area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has received the Artsmark Gold, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People Award, the Activemark and the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Swinton Queen is a good and improving school. Many parents confirm the school is highly respected in the community, typically commenting, 'I would definitely recommend Swinton Queen. My child can't wait to get to school quickly enough each morning!' The school has been particularly effective in fostering pupils' personal development and well-being, which are as a result outstanding. The good quality pastoral care provided by the staff enables pupils to feel really safe and supported in school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The social and emotional well-being of pupils is given high priority. As a result, pupils develop the skills to deal with personal issues themselves and learn to consider how their actions might affect others. Pupils work extremely well in teams both in the classroom and whilst carrying out their many positions of responsibility, such as buddy reader, school councillor, monitor or road safety officer. They show a great deal of initiative and a very high regard for the safety and well-being of others. Pupils take a very active role in improving their school. For example, the school council initiated the use of a spare classroom as comfortable library area and took part in the interviews for their new headteacher and deputy headteacher. Members were fully involved in recent improvements to the school playgrounds, successfully canvassing the views of others and working within a budget. The school has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Pupils clearly show that they know how to stay fit and healthy and thoroughly enjoy taking part in a wide range of sporting activities.

Pupils achieve well through the school, because teaching is good. From their below average starting points, pupils reach broadly average standards in English and science by the end of Year 6. However, there is more to do to improve pupils' writing skills further. This is especially so for the more able pupils, as the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in writing in national tests is lower than it should be. Pupils, especially the more able, do not always use expressive vocabulary when writing in a range of styles. Pupils make the most rapid progress in mathematics. Standards in mathematics have risen to above average by the end of Year 6, as a result of a successful initiative to improve achievement. Standards in art throughout school are also a notable strength. A careful check is kept on pupils' progress and any not doing as well as expected are given extra support. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as others in school because of the focused support they receive from skilled teaching assistants. Attendance rates have improved and are above average. The school does all it can to maintain a positive trend; however, some parents do take holidays during term time.

The quality of teaching and learning, although variable, is good overall. Teaching usually challenges pupils to think hard and work collaboratively. As a result, most lessons are active, purposeful and move along at a brisk pace. A few lessons do not have the same degree of challenge and here the rate of progress slows. Staff work effectively in teams to plan lessons together and also plan opportunities to help each other to improve the quality of teaching and share best practice. This is leading to greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers establish excellent relationships in their classrooms. Classroom management is very effective and exceptionally good behaviour is a feature of almost all lessons. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Academic guidance is good. Pupils enjoy working towards targets for improvement and are increasingly involved in setting their own targets. The school's leadership is currently working to improve the consistency of teachers'

marking because it does not always provide constructive comments to help pupils understand what it is they need to do to improve.

Pupils say they enjoy their learning because teachers 'make lessons fun'. Teachers try hard to make learning activities meaningful by linking them to a class topic and setting them in a real life situation. For example in mathematics some pupils worked on a budget to buy enough provisions for a party and others found out how much it would cost to redecorate 'Gracelands', by calculating the area and perimeter of each room. Pupils are well motivated, because they clearly see there is a genuine interest and purpose behind such activities. A group of older pupils agreed: 'When we grow up and get jobs, we will need to know how to do this.' Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning. The school has high aspirations. Staff are working hard to develop the good curriculum further, so that pupils can accelerate their rates of progress by improving their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across a range of subjects. The curriculum draws on a wide variety of additional enrichment activities. These range from whole school themed weeks, such as 'St. George and the Dragon', numerous school visits and visitors, as well as highly popular school performances for the community. Such activities provide memorable experiences for pupils, make effective links with the wider community and enhance their learning and personal development.

The headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, fosters a strong team spirit where everyone's contribution is valued. The governing body is very supportive and amply fulfils its role of 'critical friend'. The school benefits from governors' professional expertise and community links, as well as from close links with other schools. School leaders share a clear view of school improvement. Planning identifies the right priorities for improvement, but does not always describe intended outcomes precisely enough. This can make it difficult for school leaders and governors to accurately measure success. Good improvement since the last inspection has led to good academic achievement and excellent levels of personal development and well-being. These successes clearly indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. When they join school children's skills vary considerably, but are generally below national expectations. A significant proportion of children have speech and language difficulties. The

Foundation Stage leader works well with a committed staff team to provide a good range of stimulating learning activities. These meet the needs of the children well and help them make good progress in all areas of learning; this is especially so in reading. For example, children enjoyed going into their 'cave' to read a story to the dragon during a recent whole school topic on St. George and the Dragon. Foundation Stage staff are keen to improve children's early writing skills further, working in close partnership with parents. The Foundation Stage is particularly effective in developing pupils' personal and social skills. Children are encouraged to express their own thoughts and feelings and they develop very positive attitudes to learning in the school's nurturing environment. This is very much appreciated by many parents, as summarised in the comment: 'My child has become much more confident since starting school.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly amongst more able pupils.
- Sharpen the focus of school improvement planning so that school leaders and governors can more effectively measure the success of new initiatives.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Inspection of Swinton Queen Primary School, Mexborough, S64 8NE

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I was very impressed with your friendliness and excellent behaviour. I really enjoyed talking to you about your work, speaking to your staff and joining you in lessons and in the dining hall.

Your school provides you with a good education that you enjoy. The work you do and the teaching you receive are of good quality. You make good progress to reach the standards that are expected of you when you leave at the end of Year 6. You do particularly well in mathematics. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher lead your school well. They make sure you are happy and learn well.

You particularly enjoy special activities in school, such as during the recent 'St. George and the Dragon' topic, as well as taking part in school performances. You clearly know how to stay fit and healthy and like all the sporting activities at school.

The adults at school look after you well and they are good at giving you the help that you need. I have asked them to help you reach higher standards in your writing. I have also asked them to put more detail in the school's plans for improvement so that success can be measured.

Your work as buddy readers, school councillors, monitors and road safety officers shows how very sensible and helpful you are. You work very hard to make a real difference to your school. Remember to keep up the hard work and continue to come to school regularly.

I wish you all the very best in the future.