

Swillington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107843
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309515
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	249
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Dobson
Headteacher	Mrs Annie Rix
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 1999
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Lane Swillington Leeds West Yorkshire LS26 8DX
Telephone number	0113 2863220
Fax number	0113 2875799

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a relatively small school in which the vast majority of pupils are of a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, but in some classes the number is double the national average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. This figure does not reflect the degree of socio-economic disadvantage in the area the school serves, which is marked compared with that typical nationally. The school's recent awards gained in 2008 include the National Healthy Schools Award and Activemark. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises a Nursery and Reception class. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils has decreased by nearly 50 owing to a falling birth rate locally. In addition, several senior staff have left and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in 2006. The school is linked with other local schools in The Brigshaw Federation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has improved rapidly after a time when standards dropped temporarily to below average in 2007. Many parents appreciate the school's quick recovery. Some are very happy with the progress being made in all classes, but particularly in Year 6. Inspection findings agree largely with these sentiments. Achievement is good, considering that children's attainment is well below expected levels on entry to the Nursery. Recent initiatives and the influence of new staff have created a calm atmosphere in which good behaviour thrives. As a result, pupils' academic progress has quickened and standards are back at the nationally expected level in Year 6. Moreover, pupils respond enthusiastically to the demanding challenges presented to them. This year, for example, pupils in Year 6 are eagerly striving to exceed their previous best because the school has held fast to its ambition to raise standards.

All groups of pupils make good progress, which is a tribute to the support given to, sometimes quite sizeable groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Relationships are positive, which results in a climate of participation and enjoyment. Pupils' good personal development, effective teaching, a curriculum that makes learning fun and the rigorous support provided for individual pupils all combine to make achievement good. Pupils love talking about trying to be healthy and how they feel safe from bullying and 'bad behaviour'. The outward-looking nature of the school and its productive links in the community give pupils a good start in gaining skills needed at their next school and in the workplace. The number of exclusions has fallen to zero this year. The majority of boys respond well to the increasing number of lessons that contain practical work and learning through activities such as drama.

There are differences between subjects in terms of pupils' progress. In writing, progress is often satisfactory rather than good. Children enter school with fewer skills in this aspect and have generally below average standards in writing at the end of Year 2. This contrasts with reading and mathematics where standards are usually broadly average. By the end of Year 6, pupils progressed well in 2008 but writing was the weakest aspect of their performance.

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher and a core group of governors have tackled temporary problems of poor behaviour by a minority of pupils and brought standards up again. The context in which these developments have taken place has been challenging. There have been many changes to the governing body; fewer pupils, which placed pressure on the budget; and several new appointments of key staff and therefore a need to reallocate management responsibilities. Delegation, in this respect, from the headteacher has been good. New subject leaders have laid out a clear direction for the future but have lacked opportunity to observe and evaluate teaching to judge the success of their initiatives and provide advice. This affects the uniformity of pupils' progress, for example in the relative weakness of pupils' writing.

Generally, parents have a good opinion of the school, although a few are concerned about the progress their children are making in job-share classes and about the level of communication between home and school. The inspection found no evidence to confirm these concerns. The improvements to teaching, the curriculum and standards since the last inspection demonstrate the school's good capacity to consolidate its successes and progress even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the EYFS, largely owing to the very positive relationships in the setting and the strong links between home and school. Typical of parents' views is the claim that provision in the EYFS is 'wonderful'. By the time they leave Reception, children's skills are below expected levels but they have done well, particularly in personal development. Whenever slower areas become apparent, effective programmes are launched. This happened recently in reading. Children are achieving higher levels with regard to letters and their sounds as a result of thoughtful teaching. Learning is good because teaching provides a very well balanced set of activities using well chosen resources. Moreover, useful assessments of learning are made. Children's personal profiles, which are shared with parents, are excellent examples of assessments being used to promote progress. Outdoor learning is always available and children love the contrast between sitting quietly inside the trunk of the Thinking Tree, for example, and splashing in the puddles. When playing alone or in groups children use well the ideas they have learned with staff. For example, many children were successful in using the correct language for the different bowls when pretending to be the three bears in the cottage kitchen. The EYFS is well led and managed in a way that has quickly recognised what is successful and what needs to be improved. For example, children's writing is an area of slightly lower performance and this is being tackled now. Regard for children's welfare is good because the staff have a close knowledge of children and their families.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, to match or exceed those currently being attained in reading and mathematics.
- Develop a comprehensive approach to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across the leadership team to raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are usually about average at the end of Year 6. This was not the case in 2007, when they were well below average and pupils' achievements fell short of their capabilities. Nevertheless, provisional results for 2008 and evidence gathered during the inspection demonstrate that, once again, pupils are reaching nationally expected levels for their age and this constitutes good progress since they were in Year 2. By the end of Year 2, pupils have generally achieved well but are usually more consistently below average in writing. Thereafter, it is primarily in writing that pupils could do better by the end of Year 6. This is because many pupils are unable to produce well punctuated sentences that convey complicated ideas using a skilful choice of vocabulary. Ambitious targets have been set for the current pupils in Year 2 and Year 6, and already, inspection evidence shows that there are signs in pupils' work and in lessons which indicate that these are not unattainable targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like school a lot more than previously because behaviour has improved. Over the last two years, temporary exclusions have risen sharply because some pupils have found it hard to control themselves. However, the school has done well to curb the effects of this unsatisfactory

behaviour and pupils show optimism about school life this year. Behaviour is good, pupils feel safe and they appreciate the emphasis on health and keeping fit. A few pupils still lack complete self-discipline, which is why this aspect is judged as good rather than outstanding. Nevertheless, pupils attend regularly and enjoy taking part in school life. There is a marked pride in being a school councillor. The school is a thriving community with good local links and a wider perspective. Pupils in the Environment Club, for example, are keen to tell others about local and global issues of sustainability. Pupils' involvement in village life is productive. They have worked with local councillors to improve a nearby park. They raise money for charity, participate in Young Enterprise activities and enjoy the many sporting and musical events that take place, which is why spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has a good influence over pupils' learning and in the most successful lessons pupils work enthusiastically on their tasks. Learning is at its best when activities are made more appealing through role play, lots of opportunities for self-assessment and the use of puppets. Older pupils combined literacy and history to great effect when they acted out a court scene that saw a Victorian factory owner put on trial for ill treatment of his workers. Some pupils' writing was inspired when the fictitious Wild Things invited them to a Wild Rumpus party. Occasionally, teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Most pupils reach their goals, but progress in writing is not always accentuated and the slower pace of some lessons causes pupils' interest to waver. The assessment of pupils' learning is thorough and accurate. It is used well to help plan new learning. Teaching is informed by targets produced after an in-depth analysis of pupils' previous best. These targets are reviewed regularly, which is one of the reasons why pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The support they get after the reviews, including that from effective teaching assistants, is finely tuned to meet their needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum promotes good achievement. Some recent changes to the curriculum are beginning to have a good effect on pupils' learning. As a result, problem solving is now a more prominent feature in programmes of work. In Year 5, for example, a maths pig puppet was used most successfully to inspire and accelerate pupils' achievement in solving money problems. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory as is the emphasis on experimentation and fair testing in science. The school has recognised these as areas for development and the deputy headteacher is leading the improvements in these aspects. Membership of the Brigshaw Federation ensures that, among other things, pupils benefit from holiday clubs and useful links with the local high school that ease transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Lessons in Spanish, provided in part by a secondary school teacher, make the curriculum relevant and interesting. Pupils' enjoy links in the local community that enable them to learn about the role of business and commerce in the local and international context. There is a yearly residential visit for pupils in Year 6, and regular clubs in cross-country running, drama and choir, for example, promote good social and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very good care and support for pupils provide a climate in which learning is settled. The learning mentor fulfils a very useful role in listening to pupils and helping them to act positively in school. Protection procedures and risk assessments are in place and working. Attendance levels, despite holidays in term time, are maintained because the school works well to monitor absence closely and involve parents at the earliest opportunity. The school's efforts to create a good partnership between home and school were demonstrated by the recent curriculum evenings for parents. Guidance for pupils about how to improve their work is good in many respects. Learning in lessons is prompted by clearly explained objectives and this is followed up by the helpful marking of pupils' work. Any discrepancies in guiding learning lie in the degree to which pupils are encouraged to judge how well they have done in lessons. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson pupils were frequently asked to say how well they were doing, but in other classes less emphasis is placed on this form of assessment. The school has begun to tackle this relative weakness. This variation in practice is what makes this aspect good rather than outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have improved the school, from a satisfactory one, since the last inspection and have coped well with the recent changes in senior staff. The headteacher's ability to maintain the momentum, in a context of rapid change, has also been valuable to the governing body. Its newer members have not yet had time to be as effective as the central core of long-standing members. The barriers to pupils' learning associated with behaviour, particularly in the last two years, have been handled well. Levels of exclusion have been reduced significantly: the school is a positive and outward-looking community, which provides good value for money. The falling numbers of pupils and staff changes caused a general shake-up in the middle leadership. As a result, some leaders do not yet match the headteacher's good knowledge of the school gained through observation. This limits the advice available to help improve teaching. The way in which standards are already higher in Year 2 and Year 6 than they have been before at this stage in the year is a testament to the insistence on challenging targets. The spate of weak behaviour has been tackled so well that learning can now advance, more uniformly, at a good pace.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Swillington Primary School, Leeds, LS26 8DX

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. Right from the start, your polite manner in breakfast club and your enthusiasm for Wake Up and Shake Up proved to us that Swillington is a friendly and lively school.

You go to a good school that is improving fast. As you say, behaviour is a lot better this year and you feel safe and happy virtually all of the time. We came to see if you are all making good progress in your learning and to see how well all the changes in teaching have worked out. My findings are that you are making good progress generally but it could be quicker in writing. By the time children leave Year 6, they are reaching levels similar to other 11-year-olds around the country. This is good after a low year in 2007. Teaching is good. Lessons grab your attention, particularly those that include drama and other fun activities to help you learn.

It was great to talk to many of you about your work and what you enjoy most. The look of pride on the faces of members of the steel pan band when they managed to perform a complicated rhythm said it all. Also, your thoughtful approach to understanding about life in Gambia and your positive attitudes towards Black History month shows that you are concerned about life well beyond Swillington.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have asked your school to do two things to help. Firstly, your progress in writing needs to be improved. Secondly, all senior staff need to check your learning in lessons regularly. They will then be able to help you all do better and see the success of the new ideas that are being put in place, such as those in writing. You can all help the school do better by trying hard to reach your targets in writing.