

Swanbourne Church of England VA School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110451 |
| Local Authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 310310 |
| Inspection date | 23 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Christopher Parker |

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

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| Type of school | First |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 30 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Wayne Wilson |
| Headteacher | Mrs Alexandra Owens |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2 June 2003 |
| School address | Winslow Road Swanbourne Milton Keynes MK17 0SW |
| Telephone number | 01296 720295 |
| Fax number | 01296 720295 |

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|--------------------------|--------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. This was a coordinated inspection carried out at the same time as the inspections of Mursley Church of England School and Drayton Parslow Village School.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. He investigated the effectiveness the leadership and management at all levels, how well pupils are progressing and achieving and how they respond to range of opportunities the school offers. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, scrutiny of samples of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, discussions with the acting headteacher, assistant headteacher, a parent and pupils.

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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. All but three of the pupils come from out of the school's designated catchment area. None of the pupils take free school meals. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. Circumstances have changed significantly since the school was last inspected. The number of pupils on roll fell to a very low level in 2006. Since September 2007 the school has been working in close collaboration with Drayton Parslow Village School and Mursley Church of England School. The headteacher of Drayton Parslow School has become the acting headteacher. Currently, only pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught at Swanbourne. It is expected that the school will formally change from a first to a junior school, serving pupils from Year 3 to Year 6, in the near future.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher and her assistant have breathed new life into the school. Their energy, enthusiasm, and outstanding leadership and management have, in a very short time, reorganised the school, developed an interesting curriculum and generated a very caring ethos that are already resulting in good progress and outstanding personal development for the pupils. It is already a good school with the acting headteacher's vision very clearly focused on excellence.

The school has a growing reputation and, as a result, a rapidly increasing roll. Parents are extremely pleased with all that the school offers. The acting headteacher, supported by the governing body, has made full use of her successes at Drayton Parslow Village School to lay very secure foundations at Swanbourne. This has enabled the reorganised Swanbourne School to get off to a flying start.

The school improvement plan reflects the acting headteacher's clear vision and strategy for the future. It is a central feature of the leadership of all three schools and sets out clearly where and how improvements are to be made. This is being particularly beneficial at Swanbourne where, for example, the focus on writing has resulted in notable improvements in standards over the last two terms. Swanbourne has also benefited from the extension of curriculum themes and topics originally planned at Drayton Parslow. Excellent partnerships within the community, for example, with an independent school give the pupils access to first class sports facilities.

The assistant headteacher is playing a pivotal role in developments at Swanbourne. In her role as special needs coordinator she is increasingly influential across all three schools. The teachers at all three schools are taking responsibility for areas of the curriculum. However, their work as subject leaders is not yet established enough to allow them to check that what is planned is delivered effectively in the schools where they are not based. The strong leadership of science is moving the subject forward at a good pace at Swanbourne.

A number of parents commented on how their children are, 'interested and enthusiastic' about the topics they study. This is because the pupils are involved in determining the focus of the topics, which the teachers then develop and plan to ensure they meet the learning needs of the pupils. This approach ensures that the pupils' skills and knowledge develop in a range of contexts. For example, in a music lesson, one group of pupils was asked to write a press release for a forthcoming concert, whilst another carried out research and a third was involved in instrumental work with the specialist teacher. The use of specialist teachers for art, religious education, French and physical education, as well as music, is also a significant benefit resulting from the close collaboration of the three schools.

The pupils respond extremely positively to all that the school offers. It is clear that they greatly enjoy lessons. Parents commented that their children, '...skip in...' and '...can't wait to get there in the morning!' A wide range of clubs and activities extend the curriculum and add to the pupils' enjoyment and interest. The parents of one child encapsulated the impact of the school's provision, stating that it gave pupils, 'the chance to grow spiritually and socially', because, 'the staff seem genuinely interested in...their development and their opinions'. Links with a school in Bulgaria, through the Global Partnership, and geographical studies of Kenya, provide the pupils with an insight into life in other parts of the world. In religious education pupils are taught about Judaism and they have visited a mosque. However, despite its strenuous efforts, the school has not been able to sustain links with another school to give the pupils opportunities to gain a broader view of life in our multicultural society.

Many pupils have a very mature outlook and enjoy responsibility. School councillors welcome their roles. In lessons when groups are working independently individuals take the roles of 'explainers', 'encouragers' and 'managers'. They are very clear about these roles and the manager explained how he helped the group to concentrate on their work by reminding them to consider others if they talked too much! These responsibilities are preparing the pupils well for later life. The pupils have excellent attitudes to staying fit and healthy. Their designs for salads show how well they understand the importance of a healthy diet.

The pupils are very enthusiastic in lessons. The teaching is good and one of the key reasons for the success of the reorganisation to date. Lessons are very carefully planned to take account of the needs of all groups. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, for example, the most able pupils were set demanding and challenging tasks that required them to use and apply their skills to solve problems. The pupils rose to the challenge and listened intently to the teacher's guidance. The work of the class teacher and the teaching assistant is increasing the rate of progress the pupils make. In reading, writing and mathematics almost all of the pupils have made good progress over the last two terms and a few have made particularly rapid progress. As a result, most of the pupils are working at or beyond the levels expected for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The artwork is of a high standard and adds greatly to the high expectations that percolate throughout the school. Of particular note are the pupils' paintings in the style of Turner.

Much has been achieved in a short time. With the foundations in place for a new classroom and the number of pupils on roll set to almost double at the start of the new academic year the school is well prepared for the next stage in its rapid development. As one parent commented, '...this school will go from strength to strength'. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the role of the subject leaders so they can check that the curriculum is taught effectively and ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | 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? | 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| 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 | 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

03 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swanbourne Church of England VA School, Milton Keynes, MK17 0SW

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for making me feel so welcome in your school. You go to a good school, make good progress and your personal development is outstanding.

You are doing well in lessons. You behave excellently, concentrate on your work and enjoy the tasks your teacher sets for you. You particularly enjoyed the challenge of mathematical problems in one of the lessons I saw. They really made you think hard! Your teacher makes lessons interesting and lively. She gives you responsibilities such as 'explainers', 'encouragers' and 'managers' which you like and take very seriously. You get a lot of help and support from your teacher and the teaching assistant. Your work is marked to help you to improve and the targets in your books help you to know what you need to do next.

The school provides an interesting curriculum with a wide range of opportunities for you both in, and after school. You respond very positively by playing a full part in all that the school offers. I enjoyed looking at your designs for healthy salads which show how well you understand the importance of a healthy diet. I was also impressed by your artwork, particularly that in the style of Turner.

The acting headteacher and the assistant headteacher have done a great deal in a very short time to make your school successful. There are many benefits to the collaboration with Mursley and Drayton Parslow schools. The teachers in all three schools are taking responsibility for leading a subject. They have made a good start but have not yet had enough time to check the plans and teaching in some subjects. I have asked them to do more of this as soon as they can.

I enjoyed being in your school. I hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead Inspector