

Sawtry Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110714
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310397
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Marina Gough

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Thistleton
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Wheatley
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Middlefield Road Sawtry Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 5SH
Telephone number	01487 830678
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in the heart of the village of Sawtry and most of the pupils come from the local area. They are from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, and their attainment when they join the school in the Reception class is broadly average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average, although the percentage of pupils who have statements of special need is above the national average. The school is popular, but the number of pupils on roll is steadily falling because the village population is largely static, and few families with young children are moving into the area.

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 that knows itself very well. The school's priorities for improvement closely match the findings of the inspection and are well focused on continuing to raise standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school's development plan clearly articulates the next steps to be taken.

Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress throughout Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2, standards are well above the national average in reading and writing and above the national average in mathematics. Whilst there are strengths in the pupils' knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the mathematics curriculum, their mental arithmetic calculations are sometimes a bit slow and occasionally inaccurate because they do not always have a sufficiently secure grasp of number facts. Since the last inspection the school has done much to raise standards in information and communication technology, and pupils' attainment in this subject is above that expected.

Pupils behave well in and around the school and have high levels of independence. They know how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They work well together in pairs and small groups and take an active part in their learning. Teaching is good and lessons move at a good pace. Activities are well matched to pupils' levels of ability and pupils with learning difficulties are well supported so that they can progress at a similar rate to their classmates. The school provides a good curriculum that is well extended by a wide range of visits and additional learning opportunities. However, most of the long morning session is devoted to English and mathematics reducing the amount of time that can be spent on topic work and other subjects. Staff provide good levels of care, support and guidance for all pupils, and a happy atmosphere prevails throughout the school.

The school is well led and managed by an experienced headteacher who has a clear sense of purpose and who manages change and development very well. She has worked effectively with the leadership team to improve the quality of monitoring within the school and as a result there is a sharp focus to the school's work. The governing body is supportive and active in helping the school to become more effective. The school gives good value for money, and is well placed for further and continued development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The teachers work extremely well together to plan activities, and high levels of collaboration ensure that the cramped accommodation is used to best advantage. The children get a good and positive start to their education, and parents are pleased with the very well planned induction routines. Reception children make good progress and by the end of the Foundation Stage the vast majority attain beyond the early learning goals across most areas of learning. Teaching is good and teachers are very skilled in the way in which they promote spoken language and independent learning skills. Activities are carefully organised so that there is a good balance between tasks that the children choose themselves and those that are directed by an adult. Good use is made of the small outdoor teaching area to extend the learning environment and the staff are beginning to make good links between indoor and outdoor play activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving the accuracy and speed of pupils' mental calculations.
- Make more effective use of the long morning teaching session in Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Across the school pupils make good progress and achieve well. As a result, by the end of Year 2, standards are well above the national average in reading and writing, and above the national average in mathematics. Pupils enjoy all aspects of English and have a good spoken vocabulary which they use to good effect in their writing. In mathematics, pupils have a good grasp of shape and measure, and some aspects of number, but they do not always have immediate mental recall of number facts. This slows them down in their calculation work and causes them to make some unnecessary errors. Since the last inspection, there has been a real thrust on developing the pupils' information and communication technology skills and pupils of all ages attain above average standards in this aspect of their learning. They show a good understanding of how technology impacts on their lives in a wider sense.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. From an early age there is a strong focus on developing pupils' independence and, as a result, pupils are confident learners. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the school does much to extend their experience. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and have good basic skills. They generally work well together when in small groups and understand the notion of compromise. A few pupils are still settling into their new classes and are not fully familiar with the routines and expectations by staff.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. They have good regard for a healthy lifestyle having learnt the importance of diet and staying fit. Pupils are encouraged effectively to consider their choices in what to eat. The large majority are keen to take part in the numerous opportunities the school provides for fitness and sports. They learn well about how to handle and avoid dangerous situations, and know how to stay safe. Pupils' behaviour is good and occasional minor incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with quickly. The pupils have a good sense of their school as a community and have many opportunities to contribute to charities and to their wider local community. The recently established school council is popular with the pupils and they believe it has a real impact on the life of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers provide lively stimulating activities for pupils that capture their attention, and engage them in learning. They make very good use of interactive whiteboards to bring learning to life and to illustrate new teaching points. Questions are used well to extend the pupils in their thinking and to check their understanding. There are strengths in the teaching of English and information and communication technology in Key

Stage 1, but in mathematics some of the mental arithmetic starter activities are not always delivered with sufficient pace or are challenging enough. In all classes, teachers make good use of support staff to enhance the pupils' learning.

Teachers make good use of assessment information to ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' levels of ability and to track their progress and attainment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum for all age groups. It is very well extended and enriched by a wide range of visits and the input of many external agencies. As a result, pupils have a good deal of experience of life beyond their own village.

In Key Stage 1, much of the prime teaching and learning time in the morning session is allocated to English and mathematics. Whilst this organisation has had a positive impact on raising standards in these areas, it leaves only a small amount of time for topic work and other learning opportunities. One of the real strengths of the Key Stage 1 curriculum is the emphasis placed on the pupils learning through structured play activities. Activities such as role-play make a very good contribution to the pupils' personal and social development and help to give learning a real context and meaning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, support and guidance. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, and pupils know that they can go to any adult if they have a problem. The school has robust procedures for child protection and staff are very clear about their individual and collective responsibilities in terms of safeguarding pupils. Good attention is paid to matters of health and safety. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given good support through well developed provision in school and strong links with external agencies.

Pupils receive good guidance from teachers about how they can improve their work and their learning. Older pupils understand their targets and are clear about what they need to do to achieve the next target. For younger pupils, it is early in the term to introduce this process.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed at all levels. The headteacher provides the school with clear direction and sets high but realistic expectations. As a result, improvement since the last inspection has been good and well paced. Members of the leadership team share the responsibility for monitoring the life and work of the school and make a good contribution to school development planning. Monitoring activities are varied and robust, and the outcomes paint an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision giving a clear agenda for improvement. The school knows itself very well, and its capacity for continued improvement is good. Governors are supportive, but are still at an early stage of developing their monitoring role. They are effective in supporting the school's financial and personnel management as well as ensuring that health and safety requirements are met.

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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	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?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 October 2007

Dear pupils,

Inspection of Sawtry Infant School, Sawtry, PE28 5SH

I am writing to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school a short time ago, and to let you know what we found out.

We agree with your teachers that Sawtry Infants is a good school where children make good progress and do their best. You all work hard and do especially well in reading and writing. Although you have a good idea about shape and measure in mathematics, we think you could do even better with your mental arithmetic, and have asked your teachers to help you to become faster and more accurate at doing sums in your heads. We were very pleased to see how well you use computers to help you with your learning, and to see the sensible way you work together in the computer suite.

By watching you in lessons and at playtimes we were able to see how well you all got on with one another. We were glad to hear that bullying is not a problem, and to discover that if there are any problems you can go and talk to any adult in school. You behave well in lessons, and get on with your work sensibly. Your teachers do a good job in helping you with your learning, and try to make lessons exciting. However, we have asked them to change the morning sessions so that you have a bit less English and mathematics work and perhaps some more topic work. We enjoyed talking to you about the many visits you make to places of local interest and finding out about the visitors who come into school to help you with your learning.

Your headteacher and the staff and governors are doing a good job in running the school and in making sure that you are happy in your work. They know exactly what they have to do next to make sure that Sawtry Infants continues to be a good school and to help you to become even better learners.

Best wishes,

Marina Gough

Lead inspector