

Swallowdale Primary School and Community Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119987
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313469
Inspection date	13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Robb
Headteacher	Debbie Vials
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Dalby Road Melton Mowbray LE13 0BJ
Telephone number	01664 565456
Fax number	01664 482026

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from national published assessment information, the school's self-evaluation and its own assessment records, observation of the school at work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and an analysis of 71 parent questionnaires and comments. Other aspects of the school's work were not examined in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as recorded in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and, where appropriate, these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most, although the number on roll has fallen considerably since the previous inspection because of demographic changes. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The children's skill levels when they enter the school are below those seen nationally, particularly in language and mathematics development. The headteacher took up her post in September 2006 and since that time there have been several new teaching appointments.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Swallowdale provides a good education and is improving rapidly. This judgement matches the school's own view of its effectiveness. The key to the school's improvement is the incisive leadership which has effectively focused the school's efforts on improving the achievement of all pupils. Pupils feel safe and are keen to come to school, as shown in their good attendance. Their enjoyment of school is obvious and the comments of one pupil are typical when she said, 'Everyone is treated fairly and we all have fun'. The majority of parents hold extremely positive views about the education that is provided for their children.

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and by the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are significantly above those seen nationally in English, mathematics and science. This has been the picture over the last five years, with pupils making very good gains in their learning between Year 2 and Year 6. The school rightly recognised, however, that progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 was not as good as it should be. There has been a concerted and determined effort to address this imbalance; pupils are now doing much better. Programmes to improve their understanding of letter sounds, and increased and more varied opportunities for writing by younger pupils, have begun to accelerate their progress at an earlier age. Girls have traditionally attained much better than boys and the school has recognised the need to ensure reading and writing activities are made more interesting for the boys. A good start has been made through raising teachers' awareness of the issue but there are still a small number of boys in some year groups who are not doing as well as they should. The school's targets are challenging and realistic. The school's determination to raise standards further is resulting in staff continually reviewing and 'raising the bar'.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school and their excellent behaviour is a testament to this. They particularly enjoy taking part in the very wide range of sporting and physical activities on offer and this, together with their very good awareness of eating well and of how to keep safe, helps them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. From the moment they start school in the Reception class, pupils begin to develop responsible attitudes towards all aspects of school and to the wider community. Older pupils are keen to talk about the opportunities they have to act as buddies to younger pupils, the 'friendship stop' and how their involvement on the school council has brought about improvements such as to the adventure play areas. Pupils acquire many good skills that will serve them well in later life. For example, each week, groups of pupils organise and co-ordinate an event to raise small amounts of money for different charities. Their literacy and numeracy skills and excellent information and communication technology skills prepare them very well for the next stage of education. The school rightly recognises it needs to do more to make pupils more aware of the multi-cultural society in which they live.

Teaching and learning are good, with high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils do well because teachers expect a great deal of them. The youngest children are provided with a good range of learning experiences that help them to settle well and to develop good work ethics. The eradication of the weaker teaching seen in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 at the time of the previous inspection is the result of much-improved planning. All teachers are now beginning to make much better use of the wealth of assessment information when planning lessons, enabling them to pitch work at the right level for different ability groups. Very occasionally, a small number of boys do not do as well as they should, particularly in writing, because a few teachers are not making sufficient use of the assessment information

to plan their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, with teaching assistants moving to where the need is greatest and where they can have the most impact. The use of pupil targets has been introduced very effectively, and discussions with pupils show they have a very clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.

Pupils are well looked after and enjoy the good curriculum and wide range of enrichment activities. They are happy, feel safe and are at ease in approaching staff should they have a problem. Procedures to look after pupils and to keep them safe are well developed and safeguarding measures are rigorous and robust. During the last year, the school has developed very good procedures for tracking how well the pupils are performing. This information is used effectively to ensure all groups of pupils are provided with good support, enabling most pupils to do as well as they should. The school is working hard to ensure the curriculum is more interesting and appealing to the boys. New reading schemes and different approaches to writing are having an impact on the boys' enthusiasm for work and their achievement. The enthusiasm of all pupils is enhanced through the wide range of enrichment activities that are available. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the dance and musical activities and the wide range of coaches who teach them rugby, football, netball, cricket and athletics. They also talk of how the curriculum is made more interesting through science days and themed sessions such as the 'Greek day'.

The excellent leadership and management is driving up standards in all year groups. The lack of complacency and the determination to improve the progress of all pupils is refreshing. The school's self-evaluation is 'spot on', with a very clear understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses lie and, importantly, indicates clearly the progress being made to address the issues. Since her appointment, the headteacher has created a very effective leadership team that is directly focused on raising standards. Excellent monitoring of teaching, with its related feedback, has resulted in considerable improvements to its quality, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. A wealth of assessment information has been collated and is being used to identify any underachievement at an early stage. The enthusiasm and determination of the senior management team is infectious and has helped to create a climate where all staff, including those recently appointed, are wanting to do their very best for the pupils in their care. Governors are very supportive and are developing their strategic vision for the school. Based on the significant improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in standards and achievement in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, the school is very well placed to improve further

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and rapidly moving towards being outstanding. The comments of one parent reflect the feelings of others when she said, 'During her time in the Reception, my daughter developed, progressed and learnt a vast amount'. Children make good progress in the Reception class because teaching is consistently good. Considerable and effective emphasis is placed on promoting the children's personal and social development. Children are working well within the goals expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. The Foundation Stage coordinator is providing very effective leadership. The development of children's profiles and the very effective assessment of their progress is providing a firm foundation on which the rest of the school is building. There are clear plans in place to relocate the Reception class to improve the access to and the quality of the outdoor provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all groups of pupils, particularly boys, make the progress of which they are capable in their writing.
- Ensure all teachers make effective use of assessment information when planning lessons to ensure work is sufficiently challenging for all groups of pupils, particularly the boys.

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	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	1

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?	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 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	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	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

13 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swallowdale Primary School, Melton Mowbray, LE13 OBJ

Thank you all very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. Your school is providing a good education for you and I am pleased you enjoy your work.

These are some of the best things about your school

- The good progress you make in your learning so that you do very well in national tests at the end of Year 6.
- Your enthusiasm for lessons and other activities and your excellent behaviour.
- The interesting and very wide range of activities that you all participate in.
- Your excellent efforts to keep fit and well through taking part in sport and by eating healthily.
- The good teaching and support you get from adults in the school.
- The way staff care for and look after you.
- The very successful way in which the headteacher and senior staff lead the school.

This is what the school needs to do to make it even better

- Help all of you, particularly the boys, to make even better progress with your writing.
- Help the teachers to make better use of information from tests to plan work so that it is sufficiently challenging for all of you.

I am pleased that you enjoy school and wish you all the best for the future.

Thank you again for helping me with my work.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards Lead Inspector



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Lead Inspector