

Swithland St Leonard's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120163
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313539
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrea Harkness
Headteacher	Carolyn Beaton
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Main Street Swithland Loughborough LE12 8TQ
Telephone number	01509 890596
Fax number	01509 890015

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's strategies to improve pupils' achievement; the extent to which middle leaders are successful in promoting improvement; and the progress children make in the Foundation Stage. Evidence was collected from discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of governors, visits to lessons, samples of pupils' work, parents' questionnaires, a walk around the school at lunchtime and from the school's assessment and safeguarding information. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

This is a very small school, where most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Because of the small number of pupils attending the school, the level of skills on entry to the Reception class varies from year to year. It is always at least similar to that expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which provides an excellent education for its pupils. Provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent and enables children to make very rapid progress. The school has the wholehearted support of the community it serves. One parent, typical of many, accurately wrote that 'Swithland School provides a happy, stimulating, safe and caring environment for my child.' In this small school, pupils are extremely well known to the staff, who provide them with very high levels of care, support and guidance. Pupils feel completely secure, say there is no bullying and behave extremely well. They rapidly develop in confidence and self-esteem. They are rarely absent from school because they really enjoy it, and their enthusiastic response to challenging work supports their excellent achievement.

Pupils' rapid progress is also supported by a stimulating, broad and exciting curriculum, which provides a high level of challenge to pupils of all abilities. This includes those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the gifted and talented. In Years 5 and 6, for example, pupils confidently tackle complex problems in geometry more commonly met in secondary schools. Specialist teaching enhances provision in sport, French, physical education and music. Almost half the older pupils learn how to play an instrument, and many pupils take part in dramatic and musical performances. There is a wide range of well-planned extra curricular and enrichment activities, often planned in conjunction with other schools, which engages pupils' interests. Many pupils represent the school very successfully in sporting activities, as well as joining in for fun. Pupils demonstrate a very clear awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle by keeping fit and eating sensibly.

Over recent years, standards reached by pupils in the Year 6 national tests have consistently been exceptionally high, with pupils exceeding challenging targets. Results in 2007 were the highest ever. Pupils currently in school reach exceptionally high standards, and their achievement is outstanding, especially in mathematics. Teachers' high levels of expertise enable them to provide work in mathematics that is extremely challenging. The strategies the school has put in place to improve the quality of writing, where progress is not quite as fast, are beginning to have an impact.

Relationships with pupils are characterised by mutual respect, motivating pupils to work very hard. Questioning is very skilful, encouraging even the youngest children to extend their ideas. Very informative feedback in class and through marking provides clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. In a small minority of lessons, especially in writing, expectations are not as exacting as in the best lessons. Because the level of challenge is not as high, pupils' progress is not quite as rapid. However, this is improving quickly as a result of very effective staff development and coaching.

The headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership. Very well-prioritised planning is based on a rigorous and detailed analysis of the work of the school. This has resulted in significant improvements since the previous inspection. For example, much closer monitoring of pupils' achievements, with earlier interventions when they fall behind, has resulted in yet higher standards. The quality of teaching is carefully monitored and extremely effective support has led to further improvement. Very rigorous and ambitious processes for target-setting have raised expectations about what pupils can achieve. Enhanced opportunities to assume responsibilities have excited middle leaders, who now have a key role in decision-making. Excellent opportunities for professional development have enthused school staff and encouraged

them to take a lead in promoting and monitoring the impact of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The school is supported and challenged by a very well-informed and active governing body which plays a full role in strategic planning and monitoring the work of the school. Individual governors use their expertise, for example, in accountancy, to support the school. The success of the school's strategies to raise standards, which were already very high, and the excellent progress made since the previous inspection show it is exceedingly well placed to improve further.

In this largely monocultural school, excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils have an excellent awareness of the range of faiths and cultures within Britain, as well as having close links with the local church. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously. They regard the school council as important because they believe the school listens to their views and sometimes makes changes as a result of their proposals. For example, the pupils' toilets have been refurbished at their suggestion. They collaborate very well in group work and assume leadership roles extremely confidently. Excellent literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and social skills ensure pupils are very well prepared for the next step in their education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent and leadership is very effective. Children settle very quickly into the mixed Reception/Year 1 class because the arrangements for transition are extremely well organised and sensitive to their needs. Excellent levels of care ensure that younger children benefit from the opportunity to work and play with older pupils, who provide excellent role models for them. Very quickly, younger children learn how to listen very attentively and take a confident part in class discussion. Their vocabulary increases rapidly. Activities directed by the teacher, very effectively supported by other staff, are based on very careful observations and assessments, so that they very closely match children's needs. Children achieve very well. By the end of the Reception year, levels of skills are consistently above average. Excellent use is made of the rather cramped accommodation to provide a very well planned range of activities for children to choose from. Outdoor play facilities have improved and now provide the opportunity for children to learn outside as well as in the classroom. Children benefit from the creative use staff make of the school grounds to extend the teaching space.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve all teaching to the level of the best, especially in writing, by ensuring it consistently provides a very high level of challenge.

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?	1
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	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

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

9 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swithland St Leonard's Church of England Primary School, Swithland, Leicestershire, LE12 8TQ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I very much enjoyed the visit and would particularly like to thank those of you who met with me in the early afternoon. Many of your parents and carers wrote to give their opinion of the school, so please discuss this letter with them. You will be very pleased to hear that your school provides you with an excellent education, just as most of your parents and carers said it did.

Here are some important things about your school:

- Children in the Reception class get off to an excellent start and make excellent progress.
- By Year 6, standards are exceptionally high, especially in mathematics, and you make outstanding progress.
- This is because the school gives you very high quality care so you love coming to school and are eager to learn. You rise to the challenge very well when the work is difficult because the school develops your confidence.
- You are motivated to work very hard because the curriculum the school provides is exciting and often asks a lot of you.
- Teaching is excellent, especially in mathematics, and makes you want to learn.
- You behave extremely well and treat each other with great respect. Your attendance is much higher than average.
- Staff keep a careful eye on the progress you make, and take rapid steps to ensure you catch up when you fall behind with your work. They set challenging targets for you to reach, which is helping to raise standards.
- The headteacher, supported very well by the staff of the school, makes sure that the school continues to improve.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better:

- Make sure that all lessons are taught as well as the best, by checking that all work presents you with a very high level of challenge, especially in writing.

With best wishes

Marion Thompson Lead Inspector

Annex B



9 November 2007

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Swithland, Leicestershire, LE12 8TQ**

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- You are motivated to work very hard because the curriculum the school provides is exciting and often asks a lot of you.
- Teaching is excellent, especially in mathematics, and makes you want to learn.
- You behave extremely well and treat each other with great respect. Your attendance is much higher than average.
- Staff keep a careful eye on the progress you make, and take rapid steps to ensure you catch up when you fall behind with your work. They set challenging targets for you to reach, which is helping to raise standards.
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With best wishes

Marion Thompson
Lead Inspector