

Swineshead St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120558
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313671
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Nelson

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	227
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	Mrs Janet Gent
Headteacher	Mr Robert Little
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Abbey Road Swineshead Boston Lincolnshire PE20 3EN

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2008
Inspection number	313671

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school serving the village of Swineshead and the surrounding area. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is below average. Nearly all the children are of White British heritage with a very small number from other White backgrounds. Nearly all children have English as their home language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average although more have statements of their special educational needs than is usual for a school of this size. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. The school is federated with a neighbouring school under the leadership of a single headteacher and a new governing body. There have been several changes of staff recently with some new to their leadership posts. The headteacher had been in post for nearly a year at the time of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has been through an unsettled period with several staff changes including the lack of a permanent headteacher for a long period. Since the last inspection, standards in the national tests at Year 2 declined from average to well below average and stayed that way for three consecutive years, indicating significant underachievement. Standards at Key Stage 2 remained around average, suggesting that some of the underachievement was clawed back at Key Stage 2 but that children's progress was inconsistent across the school. Since the school was federated with a neighbouring one, things have taken a distinct turn for the better. Parents have noticed the improvements since federation, with one writing: 'From a school where standards were slipping, Swineshead St Mary's standards are now on the way up.' Another commented: 'Since the new headteacher has started, the school has improved dramatically.'

The parents are right. The school has improved a lot since federation, although the staff acknowledge there is still much to do. The decline in standards at Key Stage 1 has been halted and children are currently making satisfactory progress throughout the school and achieving average standards. This is because teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is now a significant proportion that is consistently good. At its best, the pace of lessons is brisk and teachers plan work to match closely the needs of all the abilities in their class. In some lessons, the work is not quite as sharply focused and some children lose interest as the pace relaxes. In the main, children have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to work hard. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Teachers make sure children know their targets and what they need to do to reach them. The school has comprehensive systems for tracking how well children are doing to ensure that any who need extra help with their learning are identified quickly and supported effectively. These effective systems have enabled the school to identify that writing still lags behind other subjects and to put in place strategies to address this.

Fundamental to the school's improvements is the leadership of the headteacher. He has dealt with difficult staffing issues, eradicated underachievement, established new management systems and structures and shared his vision with all the staff and governors. As a result, there is a common sense of purpose and enthusiasm among staff and governors and a determination to tackle the remaining areas for development. One parent summed this up in writing: 'The school is now buzzing and happy.' Parents appreciate the welcoming atmosphere with several written comments about how approachable staff are. Only a handful of inspection questionnaires were not wholly positive about the school and the inspection found no evidence to support the one or two criticisms expressed. While the school recognises and celebrates its successes, staff are not complacent and acknowledge that several staff and governors are new to their roles and, therefore, have not yet had time to have a full impact on school improvement. Because of this leadership and management remain satisfactory overall. However, the recent improvements indicate that the school has the capacity to continue improving in the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in their learning because teaching is consistently good and all the required welfare requirements are fully in place. Some exemplary practice was seen in the way children are taught about letters and the sounds they make. This is because there is the confidence to deliver a specially adapted programme. This combines the best elements of several methods with a highly visual approach that keeps children engrossed. Excellent use of

vibrant resources, for example, birthday cards and party invitations, for Louis the puppet's birthday, ensure that children want to write because they have a real purpose in doing so. There is an increasing focus on children learning through what interests them, for example, the planned use of the puppet theatre, which then became a bus. Consequently, children are becoming more respectful and are gaining a strong sense of ownership, along with good personal, social and emotional development. Good leadership steers a strong team. Support staff play a valuable role but are not yet fully conversant with the requirements of the new EYFS approach, because they are still awaiting training. The outdoor play area is used well, and its capacity for even more focused learning has been astutely identified. Partnerships with parents have improved significantly and, as a result, parents are actively helping their children to learn. This was shown when nearly all the class said they practise their letter sounds at home; some also do extra writing. Parents are gaining a sharper insight into what their children are learning through open sessions on Friday afternoons when they are invited in to work with them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that those with leadership responsibilities have appropriate training and support to fulfil their roles effectively to increase the school's capacity for improvement.
- Use the best teaching to model good practice in planning to meet the needs of all groups of learners more closely, and to improve the pace of lessons.
- Build on the recent initiatives to improve children's writing and evaluate the impact.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement over recent years has been inconsistent throughout the school. Having made good progress through the EYFS, it slowed at Key Stage 1, and picked up again at Key Stage 2. The headteacher quickly identified where the inconsistencies were and has taken steps to resolve them with some success. As a result, underachievement has been eradicated and there is increasingly good achievement. The school's accurate information on how well children are doing shows that they are on track to improve standards in national tests at Year 2 and Year 6 in 2009 and 2010. This is because the quality of teaching is improving with much that is good and none that is inadequate. The staff identify children who need extra help with their learning early and provide effective support so that they progress well towards their targets. While there are no other significant differences in the achievement of different groups, the school has identified that writing still lags behind other subjects a little and has put in place strategies to improve it.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children enjoy school and are nearly always attentive in class. The few occasions when their attention wanders are when the pace of the lesson slows and they lose interest. Children told inspectors that behaviour is good and that there is no bullying, although they do say they sometimes argue and fall out. Although one or two parents expressed concerns about behaviour, the inspectors found no evidence to contradict the children's views that it is good. Children have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, helped by visits from the emergency

services and a good programme of personal, social, health and emotional education. They have adequate opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. The school has identified a priority to develop even closer links with the church and with the local and wider community to enhance its provision for promoting community cohesion. The school council is proud to have had its views on playground improvements acted upon. Children's good understanding of right and wrong, increasing capacity for taking responsibility and showing initiative, and improving standards and achievement in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them satisfactorily for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is improving because of the impact of a rigorous programme of monitoring, support and training that has been introduced since federation. This has resulted in an increasing proportion of good teaching, although, at this stage, much remains satisfactory. Good lessons ensure that children know what they are going to learn, and involve them in gauging how successfully they have learned at the end. Interactive whiteboards and other technical equipment bring learning to life. For instance, in a literacy lesson with poetry, drama was used well as children acted out being the animals in the poem. Each sequence was then photographed and displayed on screen in order to help children to discuss the poem in more depth in the next lesson. Less successful learning proceeds at a slower pace, which sometimes leaves children restless and chatting to each other about other things. The best practice includes planning to show precisely what children of different abilities need to learn in the lesson and how they will do this. Sometimes, work provided is at only one level and, consequently, not challenging enough for everyone. Teaching assistants provide good support, especially by working with children who need extra help with their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Children are enjoying more variety in what they are learning. This is because more thought is being given to what is provided, and teachers are starting to be more creative. For example, arts week gave children time to focus on producing interesting work, based upon a visit to a village art gallery and the work of a local artist. Similarly, links between subjects are starting, such as teaching design and technology skills through literacy. There is still some way to go. The use of ICT and writing skills in other subjects is not as well developed. An improved range of extra-curricular clubs, including sports, is provided for both older and younger children. An encouraging initiative is bringing more live music into the school, and children now benefit from opportunities for instrumental tuition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children are well looked after and the Christian principles of the school are firmly established. Children with learning difficulties receive good support both in groups and as individuals. Their needs are understood and they are helped to make good progress. There is good use of information on how well children are progressing, which enables any underachievement to be swiftly identified and addressed. Targeted programmes are helping those who are not doing

as well as they could to catch up, but there is still work to do. Children are increasingly gaining an accurate view of where they are in their work, and what they need to do to improve. Procedures to keep children safe and secure are in place and child protection procedures are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

One parent summed up the views of several in writing: 'Swineshead Primary has much improved since the federation.' Another wrote: 'Learning has improved, as has behaviour.' The key to these improvements has been the determination from the federation's headteacher to drive school improvement. He has managed effectively a significant turnover of staff since his appointment and several of those with leadership roles are new to post. While they are enthusiastic and share the headteacher's vision for the future of the school, they have not been in post long enough to make their mark on school improvement. Many of the governors are new. They are committed to and supportive of the school but, again, some are still settling in their roles. One of the real strengths of leadership is the headteacher's understanding and use of information on how well children are doing in order to identify and eliminate potential underachievement. This has enabled him to address the underlying causes of underachievement and to begin to turn around the school by the effective use of challenging targets to which children can aspire.

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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?	3
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	3

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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

27 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swineshead St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Swineshead, Boston, PE20 3EN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We promised your school council that we would send you a letter telling you what we found out about your school so here it is.

We think that since your school joined the one at Sutterton in a federation it has got better. Your new headteacher has done a grand job in recruiting new teachers to replace those who left. He has also introduced very effective systems to check how well you are learning. This means that teachers can set you challenging targets for the tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Lessons help you to make satisfactory progress through the school, and in some lessons your progress is good.

Although your standards of work are improving, the teachers think you could do even better in your writing. We have asked them to check that their ideas for improving your writing are working. While some of your lessons are good, one or two are still satisfactory and we have asked the staff to work hard to make them all good. Many of the staff and governors are fairly new to the school, and we have asked your headteacher to make sure they get all the training and support they need to become fully effective.

We were impressed by your good behaviour and the way you pay attention in lessons most of the time. You can help your school to get better by always concentrating even when the work is not as exciting as you would like it to be.

Yours sincerely

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector