

Even Swindon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126213
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	315442
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Lorna Brackstone

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	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Vizor
Headteacher	Robin Phoenix-Stone
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Pasture Close Raybrook Park Swindon SN2 2UJ
Telephone number	01793 523041
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school opened in September 2006, following the amalgamation of an infant and a junior school. The school operated on two sites until September 2007 when an extensive refurbishment and extension project established the school on a single site. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, but an increasing number are from ethnic minority families for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is above the national average. A high proportion of pupils have a statement for special educational needs. The school includes a Special Resources Provision (SRP) accommodating 13 children with language difficulties. These pupils are fully integrated into the classes within the school. Children start school with standards of attainment that are well below national expectations. The headteacher has been in place since the amalgamation and a new senior leadership team was appointed as the school moved into the new buildings. In the past year there have been major staff changes and high levels of absence amongst teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This improving school provides a satisfactory quality of education. As a result of good quality provision in the Nursery and Reception classes, children get off to a flying start and make good progress. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory in the rest of the school and, consequently, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This includes those pupils with LDD and EAL. Those who are given specialist support in the SRP achieve well. Pupils leave school soundly prepared for the future.

Overall, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. The pupils' good personal development contributes very positively towards their confident speaking and listening skills. Following a successful review of provision in mathematics and science, standards in these subjects have improved rapidly. Writing skills remain below average and pupils do not always do their best because they are not always sufficiently challenged in their work. They do not have enough interesting opportunities to write at length across the curriculum and the marking in the pupils' books does not consistently help them know what to do to improve. The good care, guidance and support all pupils, including those who have LDD, EAL and those in the SRP, receive contribute greatly to their thorough enjoyment of school and their good behaviour. The views of many parents are echoed by one who explained that 'the school always puts the children's well-being first'. Pupils feel secure and have a well developed understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. Attendance is satisfactory and improving.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher has dealt well with the disruptions caused by the building works and staffing issues. He has successfully established teamwork amongst the staff and engaged them fully in the drive to improve achievement. The introduction of rigorous analysis of pupil assessments and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has provided the leadership of the school with a clear understanding of where improvements are needed. The upward trend in the Year 6 standards demonstrates that the school has a sound capacity for further improvement.

The school works well with specialist agencies for those pupils with LDD and EAL and for those in the SRP. Good links with the local football team and a nearby supermarket support all the pupils' learning and their well-being. Partnerships between home and school are good. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated a high degree of satisfaction. One parent summed up the views of the majority by explaining that 'I am extremely pleased with the progress my children have made both socially and academically. I applaud the way the school encourages and praises the children to do their best. The staff are extremely approachable and make time to listen to any concerns or queries'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The success of the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is down to the good skills of the teaching and support staff. They fully understand how these young children learn and they ensure there is good provision. Every activity planned has a teaching purpose and this ensures that the children build firm foundations in their learning. For example, interesting stories such as 'The Snow Bear's Surprise' are used effectively to help the youngsters understand the meaning of words such as 'icicles' and 'snowflakes'. When children play with shiny and glittery

objects in the water trough, they widen their vocabulary and experiment with new sounds. There are good opportunities available within the classrooms to develop skills which will help the children learn to write. This includes working with malleable materials and cutting out pictures. However, the writing area is situated in the corridor area and this means that it does not have a sufficiently high enough focus within the provision. Children's social skills develop in the role play area as they start to take turns and share with each other. The stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas provide high quality opportunities for boys and girls to choose to be active learners or take time to reflect in their learning. The close links with parents and carers ensure that the transition between home and school is seamless. The new Foundation Stage Unit leader and manager has a good awareness of how children develop. She ensures that the activities planned interest and engage these youngsters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan interesting and challenging activities so that the pupils can develop their independent writing skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that teachers expect only the best quality of work from the pupils.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking in books so that the pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Nursery and the Reception class. However, because their skills are so low when they start school, only a few attain the expected level by the time that they are ready to start Year 1.

In Years 1 to 6, pupils' achievement has been inconsistent because of the disruption to their education in the past few years. In the 2007 national tests for eleven year olds, standards were significantly below the national average. Internal school assessments and inspection findings indicate that pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to attain average levels in mathematics and science. This is because improvements in teaching and learning have increased pupils' progress and this is now satisfactory. Standards in English remain below average. Whilst they are good in speaking and listening and average in reading, they are below average in writing. The school is systematically developing pupils' writing skills through additional support groups. A focused approach to teaching letter sounds and forming sentence structures has already started to make an improvement in Year 6 but there is still some way to go. Standards in information and communication technology are as expected for this age group.

Pupils receiving specialist support from the SRP make good progress because they are given work carefully matched to their needs and teaching staff monitor their progress closely. Pupils who have LDD and EAL are making satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As a result of good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils including those in the Nursery and Reception Year, enjoy all aspects of school life and behave well. Over the past

year pupils have developed an increased understanding of the importance of regular attendance and this is improving attendance rates. Their good personal development is evident in the mature manner in which the older pupils take on responsibilities. For example, the head girl and head boy act as good ambassadors for the school when they take visitors around the building. Peer mediators and playground buddies ensure that break times are sociable occasions where all pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, feel fully included in activities.

Pupils know how to stay safe. For example, they understand that they must not talk to strangers. They feel safe in school and know that any of the adults will deal with their worries or concerns. Pupils with LDD and EAL, including those in the SRP, are confident and have good social skills because they are valued and respected. The school council is an effective vehicle for the pupils to express their views. This enables them to make a difference to their own community, such as when they have been involved in designing specific features of the new building. Pupils appreciate the nutritious meals served at lunch time because they understand what constitutes a balanced diet. The twice weekly physical education sessions, where pupils know that warm up activities gets their 'blood pumping around their body', illustrates their good knowledge of the need to exercise regularly.

All pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, make a positive contribution to the wider community through fundraising activities and singing to senior citizens. The solving of problems within teams during residential visits, the organisation of cake stalls, and their average level of basic skills, enable the pupils to be prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being when they leave school. An improvement in their writing skills and greater pride in the presentation of their work would ensure that pupils were even better prepared for their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The good management of the pupils' behaviour ensures that lessons are conducive to learning. Teachers take an interest in their pupils and this fosters good relationships. They clarify what they want them to learn in the lesson and use time well. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and support the teachers and pupils well. Teacher expectations are not always high enough in writing and, as a result, pupils' work is sometimes untidy or unfinished. In some classes too many worksheets are used and this does not extend pupils' writing skills sufficiently well.

Pupils who have LDD are taught well. They are given individual support by teaching assistants who ensure that they make small, manageable steps in their learning. Pupils in the SRP are taught by highly skilled and knowledgeable practitioners. These staff apply themselves fully to the specialist needs of the pupils and use the high quality equipment well to support individual learning programmes. EAL pupils are provided with a good range of resources that help them to make connections in their learning. Learning is good in the Nursery and Reception classes because the teachers have a good understanding of the needs of these young children. They use exciting and interesting resources to engage the children in purposeful learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of all the pupils, including those from the SRP. Topics which link with the local town, such as the growth of the railways, provides a local flavour to its content. All of the pupils benefit from the high quality range of visits that take place out of school, which link closely with the planned topics and themes. For example, a trip to Weston-super-Mare develops the pupils understanding of a contrasting location. The strength of the programme for personal, social and health education supports the pupils' good personal development and well-being. The good range of clubs after school and the wide range of opportunities to learn to play musical instruments, such as the keyboard, trumpet and guitar, are available to all pupils and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment. The school is fully aware that it needs to develop writing skills in a more systematic way and knows that further links made between subjects would make learning more meaningful to the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good pastoral care, guidance and support provided by the school ensures that the pupils feel secure and know exactly who to approach when they have a problem or concern. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Good links between home and school are encouraged from the start and these ensure that induction procedures are smooth. The family learning sessions, where staff share aspects of child development with parents, have started to have a positive effect on the achievement made in school.

Academic guidance and support are satisfactory. The pupils in the SRP have very specific targets. These are written and illustrated so that they are easily understood by each child. The new whole school tracking systems clearly identifies pupils who are not achieving as well as they should be and this has started to trigger additional support for them. Teachers talk individually to pupils about their work and target systems are being developed to help pupils move on in their learning. However, the marking of pupils' books is not consistent and does not inform pupils on they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Despite the difficulties that have been faced, the headteacher's clear vision and commitment for the success of this new school has not faltered. He knows that standards need to improve further and, in conjunction with his new senior leadership team, has set challenging targets for improvement. Systems have been established to monitor and evaluate the quality of performance of the school. The information gained from these are just starting to inform the focus on improvement. The new secure direction of the school is evident in the good quality education provided within the good quality Foundation Stage, established only a few months ago, and in the recent upward trend of standards in mathematics and science. The headteacher is skilfully putting measures in place to reduce a projected substantial deficit budget inherited from the two previous schools. Governors have a secure understanding of the strengths and areas of development within the new school. Their role in the self-evaluation of the school is satisfactory and developing appropriately as they devise ways to monitor school performance in greater depth.

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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	NA
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	3

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	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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Even Swindon Primary School, Swindon SN2 2UJ

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome at your school. We enjoyed spending time with you all. A special thank you to the pupils we spoke to who helped us to find out all about life at Even Swindon Primary.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The sound range of topics planned for you are enriched by good visits to places of interest and preparation for the next stage in your education is satisfactory. By the time you are ready to move onto secondary school you are confident speakers who listen carefully to each other. You reach average standards in your work and make sound progress. Teachers are helping you improve your writing skills by developing your knowledge of letter sounds and sentence structures. However, standards in writing are still lower than they should be. It would help your teachers if you took more care with your writing.

You behave well and are respectful towards your new school. You enjoy meeting your friends and willingly take on responsibilities and duties. You feel safe and secure at school and are confident that your opinions and views are considered. You have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. I have asked your headteacher to check that the adults in school provide you with work that challenges you and that they only accept your best efforts. I have also asked them to help you move on in your learning by telling you how you can improve your work when they mark your books.

Once again, thank you for your help. Try to always do your best and work with the adults to make sure that Even Swindon Primary gets even better and better.

With best wishes

Lorna Brackstone Lead inspector