

Swalwell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108342
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	324751
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Bennett

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	118
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 Joanne Douglas
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Lancaster-Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	South View Terrace Swalwell Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE16 3HZ
Telephone number	0191 4334000
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Swalwell Primary School is smaller than average. The numbers of children from minority ethnic backgrounds and those speaking English as an additional language are below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school provides education for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A breakfast club operates on the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Swalwell Primary School makes satisfactory provision for its pupils. Some aspects of its work are good. The high levels of care provided by staff and the recent improvements in behaviour and learning are appreciated by parents and pupils alike. Although standards remain below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 the achievement of pupils irrespective of their background is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and the school works effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that support is effective.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. This is because they have extensive opportunities to take responsibility and to influence change within the school and local community. The skills and confidence they gain from these experiences prepare them well for future citizenship. Pupils take full advantage of the after-school clubs and playground equipment to engage in physical activity and they feel safe in school because behaviour has improved and staff support them well. They are proud of their school and talk enthusiastically about its work, particularly the opportunities for learning beyond the classroom which contribute well to their enjoyment of school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although there are good features in many lessons, there are also some inconsistencies that slow pupils' overall progress. Teachers plan interesting activities which engage learners well. Where teaching is most effective relationships are strong enabling children to grow in confidence and to make an active contribution to lessons. The pace of learning slows when teachers do not check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson to ensure pupils take the next steps in their learning.

The curriculum is effective in promoting pupils' personal development and the visits and visitors that staff arrange provide opportunities for pupils to learn in meaningful contexts. However, the curriculum does not always build sequentially on prior learning therefore pupils' ability to apply skills independently is not always secure.

The rigorous safeguarding procedures and the high levels of care provided by staff contribute well to pupils' safety and emotional well-being. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Although pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work learning targets are not sufficiently clear to improve progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is central to the work of the school and its recent successes. Since taking up appointment she has been determined in her drive to improve attitudes to learning and raise achievement. She provides an excellent role model for staff, and pupils say that learning is now much more fun. School self-evaluation has accurately identified the main improvement priorities and all staff are becoming increasingly involved in this process. However, current monitoring by middle leaders is not sufficiently focused on pupils' learning. Governors are supportive of staff but have yet to fully embrace their monitoring role.

The school has taken effective steps to reduce the impact of significant recent staff changes. Successful actions to improve teaching, engage pupils well in their learning and raise standards suggest that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

From starting points that are below those typical for their age children make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. Children's overall standards remain below those expected by the time they begin Year 1. However, children's progress in their personal, social and emotional development is good. This is because staff know children well and offer good support throughout the day. They also provide good role models by involving themselves in children's play. As a result, children learn to cooperate, to persevere, and to respect the feelings of others, reaching the levels expected for their age.

Children have opportunities each day to play indoors and out and to develop skills in all areas of learning. However, the opportunities for children in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class are not always well matched to their prior learning and this slows the progress that they make.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders use assessment information to track progress and identify areas for improvement. However, monitoring is not focused sufficiently on learning to ensure that action is taken to accelerate progress.

What the school should do to improve further

Raise standards and achievement by:

- extending monitoring by middle leaders to improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning
- using information about pupils' learning to set tasks that challenge at the correct level to improve progress
- ensuring that pupils understand their targets and use them to improve their learning.

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 is satisfactory. From starting points that are below those typical for their age, all pupils irrespective of their backgrounds make at least satisfactory progress. However, standards remain below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and effective support enables them to take a full part in lessons.

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Standards are below those seen nationally at the end of Key Stage 1 and few pupils attain the higher levels, particularly in reading and writing.

In recent years, the standards at the end of Year 6 have been declining, reflected in the most recently published results from national tests. Significant staff changes and weaknesses in teaching led to uneven progress and as a result some pupils did not achieve as well as they should. Provisional data from the 2008 national tests shows that this decline has been halted. Well focused teaching in upper Key Stage 2 led to a rise in standards and the majority of pupils attained the levels expected for their age. Although current standards remain below average, past weaknesses in teaching have been largely addressed and progress remains satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. By the time they leave the school in Year 6, pupils are confident in their ability to take responsibility and to make decisions. They have many opportunities to apply these skills within and beyond the school and take great pride in talking about the work they do. For example, pupil mediators clearly explain the approaches they use to help others deal with conflict and how they provide support for younger learners as 'reading partners'. These experiences develop the skills of team working, persuasion and planning that prepare pupils well for future citizenship. The effectiveness of these skills is shown in opportunities such as 'take-over' day when pupils prepare and teach lessons.

Moral, social and cultural development are good. Spiritual development is satisfactory because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities for reflection throughout the day. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about other cultures and to use art and music from other countries to inspire their work. The opportunities for first-hand experiences contribute well to their learning and enjoyment of school.

Pupils show a determination to make a difference in the community. They express their views clearly and work in partnership with others to bring about change. This is reflected in their current project aimed at improving the local park. Pupils eagerly take full advantage of the after school sport clubs and extensive playground equipment, and are proud of their efforts to eat healthily. They feel safe in school because behaviour is now good and they are confident that adults will take care of them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although there are some good elements in teaching, there are also some inconsistencies that reduce the overall impact. Teachers work hard to plan lessons that are interesting and they provide good opportunities for first-hand experiences. This contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their ability to apply skills in real-life situations.

Where teaching is most effective, relationships are strong and pupils feel well supported and keen to contribute. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson pupils confidently used the whiteboard to demonstrate calculation methods so that others could comment on their work in order to consolidate and extend learning. In less effective lessons, the pace of learning slows when teachers do not check for understanding throughout the lesson. Because of this, opportunities to demonstrate skills and to set pupils small steps for improvement are sometimes missed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets the statutory requirements and provides pupils with a range of experiences which they enjoy. Good partnerships with other providers enrich the curriculum. Opportunities for visits are appreciated by pupils and contribute well to their learning. For example, one pupil said that he really enjoyed the visit to Alnwick Gardens because

he had something special to write about. However, the curriculum does not always build well on pupils' prior learning. For example, phonic skills are not taught sequentially therefore pupils' ability to apply these skills independently is insecure. This slows progress particularly in literacy.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes positively to behaviour, and pupils are keen to attend the sporting and creative activities offered by the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the good levels of care that staff provide. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorously implemented and arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are effective. Children feel safe and secure in school because adults know them well and understand their individual needs. Staff work hard to ensure that all children irrespective of their backgrounds or circumstances have equal opportunities to take a full part in the life of the school. For example, teachers and teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which enables them to be fully involved in lessons. They provide good role models to all pupils, listening carefully to pupils' ideas and valuing what they have to say. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and learn to be respectful of others.

The progress of pupils is carefully tracked and the school works well with parents and other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need. However, guidance for pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory. Although teachers set challenging targets for learning these are not specific enough to enable pupils to evaluate and improve their work during lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher sets clear and purposeful direction for the work of the school and she has been central to the recent improvements in behaviour and standards. There are now extensive opportunities for pupils to be involved in school decision making and these experiences contribute well to pupils' good levels of personal development.

The systems now in place for tracking pupils' progress are beginning to impact on the quality of teaching and helping to raise standards. Improved school self-evaluation has led to the accurate identification of priorities for improvement and leaders beyond the headteacher are becoming increasingly involved in these processes. Monitoring by middle leaders has helped to ensure that agreed approaches are consistently implemented. For example, the checking of teachers' planning has ensured that the agreed methods for mathematical calculation are being taught. However, monitoring beyond that of the headteacher does not focus sufficiently on learning to ensure that action taken is accelerating progress. Governors are supportive of staff and are becoming more involved in the life of the school although their monitoring role is also limited.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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	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	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 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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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**

9 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swalwell Primary School, Gateshead, NE16 3HZ

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I inspected your school. I really enjoyed talking with you. I was very impressed by the way you take responsibility in school and the help that you give to others, particularly the skilful way in which mediators help everyone to get along so well together. Swalwell Primary is a satisfactory school and you contribute to this by your good personal development. You told me that behaviour has improved and this makes school a more enjoyable place to be. Keep up the good work!

I was particularly impressed by the way you involve yourselves in the work of the school and the local community. For example, the work you are currently doing to improve the local park, and how you plan opportunities to share your skills with others on 'take-over' day. This sounds really exciting.

You also told me that you now find lessons fun and I can see why. Your teachers work hard to plan interesting activities including visitors and trips out of school. This helps you to make satisfactory progress in your learning. However, I think that more could be done to help you to learn new skills so that your work gets better and better in every lesson. These are the areas that I have asked the school to look at:

- to check that you understand your targets and refer to them to help you improve

- to check that all the work you are given is just at the correct level to help you make even more progress

- for staff to check carefully what is happening in lessons to see how they can make teaching even better.

You can play your part by thinking hard about the work you do.

I was pleased to see how much you enjoy sport and how keen you are to use the equipment on the yard each day. This will help you to stay fit and healthy. Well done!

Continue to look after each other and to enjoy your learning. I wish you all great things for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Bennett

Lead inspector