

Swanwick School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113033
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325741
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Whatton
Headteacher	Mr Keith McKenzie
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2005
School address	Hayes Lane Swanwick Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 1AR
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Swanwick serves a wide surrounding area and is a special school for students aged from 5 to 16 years. All have statements of special need. Overall, students have a very wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, autism and communication difficulties. About three-quarters of the students are boys. Most students are of secondary school age and the number of primary school age is in decline. The area served by the school is one of relatively high social and economic deprivation, with almost half the students being entitled to free school meals. The school has achieved national awards in recognition of its success in several areas: the Sportsmark Award, Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Specialist school status for Sports and English was achieved in July 2008. The school was formerly known as The Delves School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Students are full of praise for staff and the newly expanded opportunities to enjoy many different sports. 'We do everything!' said one student, talking not just about the sports activities, but all the other possibilities such as business enterprise challenges, rock climbing and creating elaborate stage scenery for the school's Christmas pantomime.

The new status as a specialist school is proving to be a boost to staff skills. These stem from additional training and from new staff with different areas of expertise and from many visiting professionals and agencies. Whilst this is having some positive effect within the school, the main impact is in the community, near and far, through sharing facilities, and through engaging in sports competitions and events on a local and national scale.

Students may enter the school at any time in their educational career, often when they are in Years 10 or 11. Typically, those of primary school age have skills that are below what is normally expected of students their age, whilst those of secondary age are mostly well below the expected level. Regardless of their age, or their particular learning difficulties, all make good progress as they move through the school, and achieve well by the time they leave.

The considerable improvement seen arises from governors' astute appointment of an effective headteacher who saw a truly positive direction for the school. With a very capable staff team at all levels, the school is developing its new status in exciting ways. This has inspired staff and they show great willingness to put in extra effort. Intelligent deployment of all staff makes the most of their existing skills, such as in providing courses in construction, computing, art or hair and beauty.

The expanded curriculum provides all students with opportunities to develop their interests and skills across a huge range of activities. Recent developments in information and communication technology (ICT) help staff to build up their own skills and organise the curriculum more efficiently. However, opportunities are lacking for students and staff to make good use of the technology across the curriculum. The school assesses the progress made by students well, but the information that is held on the computer network is not always used effectively when lessons are being planned for the least able students.

Governors, senior leaders and staff form a powerful team with a common purpose. School leaders have a good perception of the local and wider community, and clear plans for how the school will go on making a powerful contribution to bringing the community closer together. The local authority has been very supportive in many ways. Other agencies such as sporting and outdoor groups, the Connexions partnership and placements for work experience and short vocational courses are well involved in different initiatives now. The school has improved well since the previous inspection, and there is a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that specialist school status has greater impact on the curriculum.
- Improve opportunities for students to make use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Make more effective use of existing assessment systems, particularly the new ICT assessment system, to plan lessons specifically to meet the needs of the less able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Because of their varied and extensive learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students attain standards that are below or well below those generally expected of students of their age nationally.

On entry, students have a level of skills that is around the average for students who have their range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who have been excluded from other schools. As their feeling of security increases, so does their confidence in the school, and they begin to take an interest in what is being taught. Their personal and social skills develop well; they pay attention more, enjoy the many physical and games activities, and also begin to improve their skills in writing, mathematics and art, for instance. Students who are autistic, for example, begin to relate to the people around them much more socially, and take part in small independent learning tasks.

Within about a year of arriving in school, students' work demonstrates good progress in their academic and wider skills. This trend continues through each key stage. In nationally verified tests and assessments at the end of each key stage, students achieve above the average levels in the county for students with similar difficulties in English, mathematics and science. By the time they leave at the end of Year 11, almost all students achieve well above that average level. All students leave with a nationally recognised qualification. For students who have severe or moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities this might be the many different courses within Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). More able students who have less severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including some autistic students, achieve up to GCSE in mathematics. Students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties frequently gain awards in vocational courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy coming to school and, overall, their attendance is satisfactory. Many now have dramatically better attendance rates than previously because of the school's strong efforts. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is enhanced by their mature appreciation of the needs of others. They are particularly sensitive to how new students feel: many go out of their way to be supportive and kind to newcomers. Typically, parents are pleased with the improvements in their children's social skills.

Relationships are good between students and teachers. 'It works both ways,' one student said. 'If we respect the teachers, they respect us.' Being a school councillor or junior sports leader is valued because it offers opportunities to take responsibility within the school community. Students have a good awareness of global issues through, for example, raising funds to educate a child in Afghanistan. The excitement of participating in a world mathematics competition and communicating electronically with a school in Philadelphia (USA), highlights how they benefit from using ICT in small ways.

Physical activities and the importance of diet are at the core of students' good appreciation of a healthy lifestyle. They are pleased that they know how to put a nutritious meal together for themselves such as spaghetti Bolognese or scrambled eggs. Behaviour is good; the concept of what is bullying varies, but all who were spoken to were emphatic that they feel safe, and are confident to talk to adults about their problems. They especially value their own tutor and the

'positive support workers'. Students acquire good skills for their future lives, such as understanding the need for punctuality, a tidy appearance, getting on with others and the importance of budgeting their money.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are planned and prepared well. They have a clear beginning and the main part of a lesson often includes practical activities that keep students' attention and motivate girls and boys. Staff have friendly relationships with students, use humour well, and always manage behaviour with fairness and firmness. Students almost always respond positively, cooperating with each other and following instructions. They try as hard in their written or mathematics work as they do in their sports activities or geography trips. The more able students, particularly, have a clear understanding of how well they are learning, and what the next step will be. This is strengthened by staff discussing the main points of the lesson with students at the end, in order to remind them how it fits in with their previous and future lessons. Teachers use many good learning resources effectively, although the use of computer equipment across the school is too limited. Support staff in classrooms, reading groups and 'booster' groups are skilled, and many have extra responsibilities that make the most of their particular talents. Sometimes, the difference in the work given to all the different students in a class is only a matter of how much support some will need, rather than being easier for some students and harder for others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There have been many successful changes and additions to the curriculum that meet the widely differing needs of all students. Sporting, physical and games activities are naturally very evident in school, with many imaginative and well-taught courses that range from canoeing and windsurfing to dance and gymnastics. English, mathematics and science rank high among the curriculum priorities, along with very clear programmes for developing students' social and personal skills. Creativity is well developed in lessons such as visual and performing arts, and a knowledge of history and geography is encouraged effectively in the classroom and in the many visits around the region. In English, mathematics and physical education lessons, students are grouped by ability to ensure that the teaching is challenging for the group. Students have good access to practical and vocational courses in and out of school, such as construction, vehicle maintenance and child care. These courses are particularly organised to motivate students who have behavioural and emotional difficulties, and in this they are very successful. The 'Young Enterprise' business challenges combine with courses in money management, and independent living skills to create a successful spread of activities for students' wider learning in life. Many courses lead to nationally recognised certificates, such as through the Open College Network (OCN) and the Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society for arts (OCR) scheme that result in 'Entry Level' awards. School leaders are beginning to develop the ICT curriculum since the fitting of much new equipment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is a significant strength. Tutors and 'positive support workers' establish good links with parents and carers to support vulnerable students. Strong links to external agencies, through the 'Working Together' team, ensure students' welfare needs are met effectively. Arrangements for ensuring students' health, safety and security are strong. They take into account the needs of all individual students, including for those who are in the care of their local authority. A breakfast club ensures that students can start the day with a healthy snack. When students feel they need space to cope with emotional crises they can go to the 'Magic Rooms' to calm down and reflect. Assemblies and some lessons in Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) are directly aimed at helping students to think through their difficulties. This has significantly reduced the number of students being excluded. A strong focus on promoting and rewarding good attendance has halved the rate of unauthorised absences. Students at risk of exclusion or who rarely attend are being encouraged positively by attending more personalised classes that generally have a practical and vocational emphasis. Good academic guidance ensures that most students are aware of their academic and personal targets. They appreciate their work being marked regularly, 'because then you know what you're learning and how to make it better,' one student explained. Assessment systems are good and are used well to analyse trends in how well groups of students are making progress. They are beginning to be refined further, using the new ICT systems to make sure that more effective use is made of the information gathered to support less able students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's assessment of its own performance is accurate. School leaders effectively identify strengths and weaknesses and develop successful ways to overcome shortcomings. Insightful leadership by the headteacher in conjunction with a very able deputy headteacher has led to the formation of three very effective leadership teams to manage different aspects of the school. Strongly supportive, experienced and well-trained governors provide clear guidance on matters such as the budget, new building plans and the development of very effective staff training and curriculum innovations. Leaders have created equal opportunities for all students to enjoy a suitably challenging curriculum taught by well qualified, experienced and dedicated staff. They have created strong whole-staff morale, both when working towards the specialist school status, and since then in spreading their good practice into the community. Their forward thinking is clear and purposeful, demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve further. Largely inspired by the new Sports College status, much of the school's effort is very well focused on sharing community and school facilities, to the benefit of students and members of the public alike.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

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

5 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Swanwick School and Sports College, Swanwick, DE55 1AR

I'm sure you will remember when two inspectors visited your school recently. I would like to thank you all for being so polite to us, helping us, and talking with us in lessons and meetings. You made it a very enjoyable two days.

We found that you go to a good school that has made a lot of improvements in the past three years, since it was last inspected. Mr McKenzie, particularly, has had a very clear idea of how he wanted to make improvements, and which ones to make. He has been helped tremendously by all the staff around him, and by other people from outside the school. You know some of these people from all of your sports activities, but there are many others as well.

We think you are taught well, and that you enjoy your lessons. You behave well and pay attention, especially as there are so many different lessons that you find especially interesting, such as the brick-laying, cookery and art and design. This is all on top of the main classroom lessons, and the tremendous variety of sports and games you can take part in, both in school and in many places in the area, and beyond. We found that you are well looked-after in school, and you told us that you feel safe and feel able to talk to staff if you have problems of any kind.

There are some things that we have asked the school to do a little better. Firstly, we would like to see you and your teachers using the computing equipment more in as many subjects as possible. We are also asking teachers to use their information better to plan lessons so that those students who need more support can work on their own more often and effectively.

I hope that you all continue to enjoy your time at Swanwick, and I wish you all the best for the future.

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector