

St Swithun's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123177
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327865
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Vanessa Ward

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	334
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	28
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Nigel Northcott
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Evans
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grundy Crescent Kennington OX1 5PS
Telephone number	01865 438933
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Swithun's CofE Primary School is larger than average. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at the start of the term in which they will be four. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. Fewer pupils than average qualify for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. This includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties and some with behavioural, social or emotional difficulties. The school has close links with Kingfisher Special School, which is located on the same site. Pupils in the special school have moderate to severe learning difficulties and, at times, are included in classes at St Swithun's. A privately run playgroup is based on the school site and most of these children transfer into the school's Nursery.

As a result of the previous inspection, the school was asked to make significant improvements by accelerating the progress of boys and more-able pupils in writing and improving the quality of teaching for these groups, ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the leadership team was sharply focused on groups that were underachieving and making sure that the environment reflected high expectations and stimulated interest.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

As a result of improvements since the previous inspection, St Swithun's now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Several aspects have improved so that they are now good. In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The improvements are the result of much hard work by the school's senior leaders, staff and governors. It is to their credit that they have achieved this level of improvement given the temporary changes of staff that have occurred during the year. Parents greatly appreciate the changes that have taken place, typically commenting that 'the school has made good progress since the last inspection' and 'my son is particularly motivated by the recent changes'. However, the staff know that the momentum of change must continue if pupils are to achieve as well as they can. The improvement to date indicates that the school has satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

Children are given a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average, but are rising. Factors that have contributed to this are the rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress, interventions to support those who could do better and giving teacher's greater accountability for their pupils' progress. Similarly, the more creative and exciting curriculum is helping to motivate both boys as well as girls, and they speak enthusiastically about the stories they are writing in the form of a legend. Greater challenge for more-able pupils, particularly in writing, is accelerating their progress. Teaching and learning have improved, but there is insufficient good and outstanding teaching to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their writing skills in different subjects are now well established. The school recognises that numeracy skills and information and communication technology (ICT) skills also need to be practised in a range of different subjects.

The senior leaders work well as a team and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the actions that need to be taken to bring about improvement. However, the roles of subject leaders are not sufficiently developed to enable them to drive improvements in their subjects. Staff absence has hindered this development, but staffing is expected to be more stable from the start of the autumn term.

The good quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school contributes substantially to the good outcomes for pupils' personal development and well-being. Support for pupils when they join or leave the school, and when they move between key stages, is good. This term the older Reception children share a playtime with Year 1 pupils as buddies, to help them prepare for their move to the infants. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils relate well to each other. They enjoy informal team games and appreciate the playground buddies from older classes who support them and give out small games equipment.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Liaison with parents and carers is comprehensive and enables all children to settle quickly and happily into school. Children enter the school with skills that vary considerably but are broadly typical of three-year-olds. Areas in which their skills are less well developed include early writing,

number recognition and independent self-help, and the staff therefore rightly focus well on developing these skills. The good provision and attention to individual needs enables the children to achieve well, including those who are learning to speak English. By the time they move to Year 1, most achieve the expected goals and some exceed them, especially in physical and creative development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. In line with the school's initiative, a focus on activities to encourage speaking, listening and writing, combined with the regular teaching of letter names and sounds, is helping to develop writing skills. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those the children choose for themselves. Planning is thorough and staff use well the assessment information about each child when planning what they need to learn next. The outdoor area is used successfully to promote all areas of learning. Good plans are in place to reorganise the Early Years Foundation Stage into one unit, to include Nursery and Reception children, in order to make better use of the combined inside and outside learning spaces. The welfare of the children is given high priority and they are very well cared for. In the temporary absence of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the role is being managed competently by another member of staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more of it is good or outstanding.
- Increase the teaching of basic skills in mathematics and ICT in a range of other subjects.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders so that they can drive improvement in their subjects.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although their progress is beginning to accelerate, they still have considerable catching-up to do in order to achieve as well as they are able. The initiatives introduced by the school are beginning to accelerate progress, but changes of staff have interrupted this in some classes, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The introduction of extended writing sessions and a much greater focus on writing skills, such as vocabulary and punctuation, have increased pupils' enjoyment of writing and their achievement. The school recognises the need to build on these initiatives and to extend the focus to numeracy and ICT. Assessment information shows that there is no significant variation in the attainment of different groups of pupils and that the attainment of boys has improved. Pupils with moderate learning, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties make similar progress to other groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons in all subjects and are very enthusiastic about the extra clubs that are provided by the school. The academic and sporting achievements of pupils are celebrated in school assemblies, and there is healthy rivalry between members of the different houses in the competition to gain the highest number of house points. Pupils are respectful of each other and of their teachers. They move around the school in an orderly manner and are very polite to visitors. There is a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Pupils report very little incidence of bullying and say that any such occurrence is dealt with very quickly. They know to whom they can turn if they are anxious or upset. The school

council speak positively about their school and how changes that they have helped to implement have made a real difference. They speak about the effectiveness of the school's detention system, which has helped to minimise inappropriate behaviour. Pupils have good knowledge of how to keep healthy and most choose a healthy diet at lunchtimes. The ethos that pervades the school plays a significant role in both spiritual and moral development. Social and cultural development is also good. Attendance is above average and most pupils are punctual. Opportunities to organise and run stalls, raise money for charities and to learn and apply basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for their lives in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school the relationships between teachers and pupils are constructive. Teachers make good use of assessment systems to track the progress of pupils. In most lessons teachers make sure that work is carefully matched to the individual needs and differing abilities of pupils. Teaching assistants work well with pupils in order to promote good learning and enjoyment, and to ensure that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities take a full part in lessons. Pupils are well motivated and are eager to take an active part in lessons by answering questions and participating in discussions. Pupils in Year 1 were keen to describe their imaginary Robot City. The sharing with pupils of what they are to learn makes the teachers' expectations very clear. The most effective lessons are well planned and proceed at a brisk pace, which helps pupils to learn well and make good progress. However, there is inconsistency across the school in the quality of teaching. These lessons are characterised by a lack of urgency and enthusiasm on the part of the teachers, which fails to generate interest in learning. As a result, pupils' progress in their learning is inconsistent. The school is aware that there is still room for further improvement in the quality of teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and interesting and supports pupils' personal as well as their academic development. The introduction of a more creative curriculum has increased pupils' interest in learning. The involvement of pupils in planning each topic, especially in Key Stage 2, is very successful. They greatly enjoy the 'whiz bang!' introduction to each topic. The development of writing skills in subjects other than English has been successfully introduced. The school is now reviewing opportunities to develop and use skills in numeracy and ICT in different subjects. Although many classrooms contain interesting displays of pupils' work and provide useful prompts to help pupils, the richness of the curriculum is not reflected fully around the school. After school clubs, activities such as music, sports, science and ICT, visitors to school and educational visits greatly enrich pupils' learning and stimulate their interest.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care, guidance and support contributes well to pupils' personal and academic development. Secure procedures and practices are in place to ensure the safety and protection of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Pupils from Kingfisher Special School are integrated successfully into St Swithun's for some lessons. Close

liaison with outside agencies ensures that extra support is provided when necessary. Academic guidance is often good, enabling pupils to understand clearly how well they are doing, and to be aware of their learning targets and of what they need to do to improve. However, there are inconsistencies and in some classes and lessons pupils are less well informed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although the senior leadership team has been reduced because of staff absence, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff have worked together successfully to bring about school improvement. More rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning is providing useful feedback to teachers, and this, combined with support and coaching for staff where necessary, is improving the quality of teaching and learning. The process of school self-evaluation is being expanded to include all stakeholders. The tracking of progress made with priorities for improvement is rigorous and involves all staff. The senior leadership team and governors realise the urgency with which this work needs to continue. The governing body is working hard and successfully to increase its understanding of its roles. Governors are becoming more proactive in being critical friends to the school, as well as in holding it to account for the quality of its provision and outcomes. The school has done much work to promote community cohesion in school and within the local community and it is expanding its links further afield. It evaluates its initiatives informally and has plans to make this more process more rigorous.

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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?	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	3

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	2
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	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	3
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**

09 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Swithun's CofE Primary School, Kennington, OX1 5PS

I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school, and to thank you for talking to us. It was very helpful for us to hear your views, and we found you interesting to talk to, polite and helpful. You spoke enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things in which you take part. We have decided that St Swithun's School is a satisfactory school.

These are some of the things we liked the most.

- You get a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The adults take good care of you and you feel safe in school.
- You behave well and want to do your best in lessons.
- You enjoy school and are keen to keep fit and eat the right things.
- You are working especially hard to improve the quality of your writing.
- You are given lots of exciting things to learn.

We have asked the school to improve three things.

- We want you to make faster progress so we have asked your teachers to make sure that their teaching helps you to do this in all lessons.
- To help your skills in numeracy and ICT to develop faster, we have asked your teachers to look at ways in which you can use them in other subjects, such as geography or science.
- Improve the way in which teachers who are in charge of particular subjects can help other teachers, so that you make good progress in all subjects.

You can help by working hard. We hope that you continue to enjoy school.

Yours faithfully

Vanessa Ward

Lead Inspector