

Swiss Cottage School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100096
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	335485
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Sprinz
Headteacher	Ms Kay Bedford
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
School address	80 Avenue Road London NW8 6HX
Telephone number	020 7681 8080
Fax number	020 7681 8082
Email address	head@swisscottage.camden.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent just under half of the inspection looking at lessons. They observed 23 lessons and they observed every teacher. In addition, the inspectors met with pupils, staff, parents and governors and looked at a range of the school's documentation. They considered 112 parent questionnaires, 109 pupil questionnaires and 67 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the evidence for the school's evaluation of all outcomes and provision as outstanding
- the achievement and progress of all pupils from their starting points
- the quality of assessment procedures in each part of the school and how effectively this translates into effective planning and target setting
- the quality of teaching throughout the school. Whether strengths and weaknesses are effectively identified by the senior team and whether there are appropriate measures to improve standards where necessary.

Information about the school

The school provides for pupils with a wide range of needs, including moderate and severe learning difficulties, emotional, behavioural and communication difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders. The pupils are from a number of ethnic groups and there are currently 84 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school gained specialist status in Cognition and Learning in 2006 and has received a number of awards over recent years, including the Investors in People Gold award in 2009. The school is due to be rebuilt in 2010 when it will be expanded to take in more pupils and will co-locate with a new secondary academy on the same site.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Swiss Cottage is an outstanding school. The previous three inspections also judged this school to be outstanding. There has been continual improvement over a long period because of an unrelenting drive to provide the very best education for all the pupils. As a result the outcomes for pupils both in their achievement and their personal development are exceptional. Pupils feel valued because of the high-quality relationships which exist at all levels. They thoroughly enjoy school, attend very regularly and report that they feel safe within its welcoming environment. One parent commented, summing up the views of many, 'Sending my child to this school was the best thing I ever did.' Despite the school's strenuous efforts to promote good attendance, a very small number of families have not been able to ensure that their children attend regularly.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a clear focus on further raising standards to accelerate pupils' progress. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is generally very low but pupils in each age group, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, achieve exceptionally well, and by Year 11 almost all the pupils gain a range of qualifications including GCSE and Entry Level. A major reason for this outstanding progress lies in the exemplary way staff assess and record every small step in the pupils' learning. Teachers then use this information to make sure the pupils are learning as quickly as possible and to provide personalised support for any pupils who are not doing as well as they should. The staff have very high expectations of the pupils and set them challenging targets. The school is highly inclusive and provides very well for those who are vulnerable and those with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils with autism and communication difficulties make exceptional progress. The provision for these pupils is exemplary and a real strength of the school. Pupils for whom English is not their home language also make outstanding progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and executed by knowledgeable teaching staff. Teachers make very good use of the experience and expertise of their support staff to provide each learner with a high level of individual tuition. The excellent quality of assessment also ensures that the curriculum is outstanding because teachers make sure that the learning is tailored precisely to the needs of each pupil. Activities are unfailingly interesting. The pupils enjoy their learning, they look forward to lessons and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

The headteacher and senior management team work tirelessly to provide clear educational direction for the school. The school's processes for monitoring its own work are exceptionally good and take into account the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. The school's comprehensive evaluation of its own performance is very focused and effective and results in continual small developments in its provision. This excellent

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

school thus has the capacity to sustain further outstanding improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of attendance to above the national average by providing specific support for those few families with persistent absence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

The pupils make outstanding progress from attainment which is generally very low when they enter the school and which remains low because of the pupils' complex learning difficulties. Pupils of all ages, however, achieve very well, particularly in literacy, numeracy and communication. The pupils make excellent progress in lessons in meeting challenging targets which are sharply focused and matched to their starting points and ability level. Any underachievement by an individual or group is quickly identified and staff then put in place extensive and effective intervention measures. This additional provision has a significant impact, for example, on the progress of pupils at the earliest stages of learning to speak. The pupils receive a high level of individual teaching. This encourages them to attempt new work and to learn by their mistakes, confident in the positive support they receive. For instance, a small group of Year 6 pupils made outstanding progress in learning the difference between direct and indirect speech. They were asked to use the voice which the character in the book they were reading might have used. After a hesitant start, the pupils relaxed as the teacher encouraged their contribution. By the end of the session, the pupils were having great fun in confidently and correctly using the speech marks to speak in 'funny' voices. The pupils with autism in the specialist class make outstanding progress. Often the pupils enter the class with extremely limited communication and challenging behaviour. Through excellent assessment practice and precision teaching, they quickly learn to communicate through signs and symbols and many pupils make excellent progress in developing speech and in learning how to communicate appropriately with others.

The school provides a happy, calm haven where pupils enjoy learning. Their opinions and comments on a variety of school issues are actively encouraged and always taken very seriously. The school, for instance, demonstrates exemplary practice in promoting the 'pupils' voice' so that all the pupils feel very secure in knowing that their feelings and opinions are important to the school. They feel well cared for by staff and they state that there is no bullying or unpleasantness. Their behaviour is exemplary and they demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. The pupils learn to regulate and understand their own behaviour through the school's outstanding strategies to encourage their personal development. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils is excellent because they enjoy school so much.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The pupils demonstrate growing levels of empathy, tolerance and understanding. They play happily together and are very supportive of each other. They are pleased when others do well in their work and they socialise very successfully. Their cultural understanding and their knowledge of

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

their local and wider communities is very good. They wholeheartedly support initiatives to improve aspects of their life in school and the local community. The pupils gain a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. The leavers are well equipped for their transition to college or training by their outstanding progress in basic skills, in developing their self-confidence and through their excellent progress in learning about the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is consistently well matched to each pupil's learning needs. This is achieved through very effective and perceptive continual assessment which enables teachers to accurately adapt and focus work to suit each pupil's attainment and achievement. Teachers know their pupils very well. They skilfully plan to provide for learners of differing ability and to ensure their individual targets stretch them. The

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

well-trained teaching assistants work effectively with each small group, providing very good support. They have high expectations of the pupils and challenge them through the brisk pace of lessons and well-directed questions. Teachers and assistants manage behaviour very well and this results in a relaxed atmosphere and excellent relationships. The pupils with autism work on specifically designed individual programmes and receive skilled individual tuition and support from highly trained teachers and other staff.

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on basic skills while retaining an appropriate breadth and balance. The English and mathematics programmes are noteworthy for their exemplary schemes of work underpinned by excellent arrangements for assessment and planning. There are excellent opportunities for older pupils to learn vocational skills through community and work experience. There is an extensive range of activities to enhance the pupils' learning, including flourishing after-school clubs. The school places a high priority on physical education. Sports coaches give pupils an outstanding introduction to many sports such as cycling, climbing and trampolining. There are exciting residential trips such as a week in a 'tall ship', sailing along the coast from Salcombe to the Isle of Wight and back. These activities have a significant impact on the pupils' enjoyment and their self-confidence.

There is an outstanding programme of personal, health and social education which has a strong impact on the pupils' personal skills. Through this programme, the pupils learn to value themselves and others and to maintain very high standards in their moral and social contribution to the well-being of everyone at the school. An extremely caring ethos results in very happy children who thoroughly enjoy school life. The school works exceptionally well with a range of external support agencies. As a result, vulnerable children receive excellent support which enables them to get the best out of their learning. Transition arrangements are very good and have resulted in every pupil in the last three years going on to further education or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been inspirational over a long period in leading staff to ever greater effectiveness. The school's leaders have continued tirelessly to drive up the already high quality of teaching and the students' achievements since the previous inspection. Managers are never complacent and a great strength of the school lies in the rigorous and effective way they monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of the

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

school's performance. This leads to the continual raising of standards through sharply focused school improvement planning. Governors are involved in all aspects of school life and provide outstanding challenge and support to the school. Communication is excellent. Staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued and, consequently, there is a clear common purpose which permeates the life of the school. The quality of professional training for all staff is outstanding. This makes a significant contribution to sustaining pupils' outstanding achievement.

Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding requirements are robust and meet current statutory guidelines. The school works extremely well with outside agencies to support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs. Staff also work very effectively with parents to engage them in their children's learning. The school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. It promotes cohesion well within its own community and engages with a wide variety of local partners. The school actively embraces cultures from around the world and has achieved an award for its work with international schools. Children at the school and their parents, who come from many different countries, are welcomed into the school's community. The school's work is exceptional in promoting the equal opportunities of all pupils and their families and in celebrating the diversity found in the school community. In addition the school is outstandingly successful in removing barriers to learning for pupils, including those with additional learning needs, and thus improving their life chances.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Children greatly enjoy being in the Nursery and Reception class. They come in with big smiles. They find the activities exciting and interesting and this motivates them to achieve well and make outstanding progress. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Teachers' planning is excellent and underpinned by a very high standard of assessment of the children's achievements. The staff plan specifically for each child's ability and interests and this results in rapid progress. The teaching is securely founded on a very good knowledge of how young children learn and progress. The adults provide excellent support for the children, especially in helping them develop their personal, social and communication skills. The staff consistently give the highest priority to safeguarding the children. Relationships are excellent with children and parents. This enables parents to give good support to their children at home. The provision is very well led and managed. The children's well-being and progress is helped significantly through the exceptional organisation and planning for continual improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents returned an extremely high number of questionnaires. These were very positive about every aspect of the school's work. The comments parents made demonstrated their high regard for the school and their child's experience there. One parent commented, 'Before joining Swiss Cottage, my son was a very unhappy boy and would cry every night at bedtime that he didn't want to go back to school. Now he is getting his bag ready for the morning. That makes me so happy.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swiss Cottage School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 152 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	80	80	20	19	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	80	80	19	18	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	74	24	23	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	64	34	33	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	74	74	25	24	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	71	71	27	26	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	73	28	27	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	67	67	30	29	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	71	27	26	1	1	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	74	25	24	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	67	32	31	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	74	74	25	24	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	81	19	18	0	0	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 March 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Swiss Cottage school, London, NW8 6HX

Not long ago my colleagues and I came to your school to see how you were getting on and to suggest things to make your school even better. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed meeting with you in a discussion, in your classrooms and at lunchtime in the dining room. Thank you and well done. We can see that you all enjoy school very much. We were with you for two days. That was, however, long enough for us to decide that your school is outstanding.

Here is a list of some of the things about your school that we particularly liked.

- You work hard and all make excellent progress in your work and in your personal development. Your behaviour is excellent.
- The many different people at the school look after you very well.
- You do lots of interesting activities including those that help you to become independent, make choices and learn all about different places and customs.
- All the adults work very hard to give you as much help as possible. They are very good at working out how well you are doing and then preparing interesting work for each of you.
- Your headteacher and the staff run the school very well and everyone, including your parents, gives them strong support.

We think the school could improve even further if a small number of you improved your attendance so that you came to school as often as possible.

Please thank your parents for me for all the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Yours sincerely,

Melvyn Blackband

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.