

Silverstone Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121990
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340062
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Hall
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Letts
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. The reporting inspector spent the majority of the available time observing pupils' learning. In all, he observed all class teachers at least once as he visited eight lessons and, in addition, observed pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at work in all classes. The inspector held meetings with the teaching staff, representatives of the governing body, and pupils. He observed the school's work, and looked at a range of information, including data showing the progress made by pupils and samples of pupils' work. Questionnaires returned by 60 parents, 91 pupils, and 10 members of staff were analysed.

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

- the extent to which the school is able to demonstrate the good progress claimed, particularly for boys and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the extent to which teachers provide consistently achievable challenges for all groups of pupils
- the impact of academic guidance, particularly the targets set for pupils to achieve
- the quality and impact of assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average rural school. It has been federated with the village infant school since 2004, and both schools share a headteacher and a governing body. Almost all of its pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. Most of these pupils have general learning difficulties, and there are very few with severe needs and/or disabilities.

The school has the Activemark, in recognition of its commitment to physical education and sport, and Healthy School status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good education for its pupils. All pupils are warmly welcomed and fully included. They make good progress because they are taught well and benefit from a well-planned curriculum, enhanced by a wide range of activities that help enrich pupils' learning. By the time they leave, at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average. The teachers are particularly adept at providing their pupils with lessons designed to capture their imagination and provide them with plenty of practice in developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. As a result, the pupils enjoy school. They are keen to learn, attentive and play a full part in lessons. The parents are well aware of this. Many of their questionnaires had highly appreciative comments appended, typified by: 'A lovely community school - displays good traditional values but delivered by staff in an up to the minute manner. My child loves it!'

Another reason for the good progress made by pupils is the good quality of academic guidance provided in lessons. Teachers are good at using their assessments of pupils to set clear targets for them to achieve in numeracy and literacy over a period of time. Pupils interviewed said that the targets are really helpful, and knew clearly what their individual targets are. However, the guidance provided through teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. There are many examples of encouraging comments made by teachers in pupils' books. In some classes, pupils add comments in response to the teacher's marking, but these examples of pupils' self-evaluation are the exception. Teachers do not always give clear guidance about precisely what pupils should do next in order to improve their work. Where evaluative comments are made, they do not generally refer to the targets set for pupils.

A particularly noteworthy feature of the school is the pupils' good personal development and well-being. The strong family feel that permeates all aspects of the school's work stems from the very effective promotion of pupils' social awareness and the excellent quality of the pastoral care provided. Pupils' impeccable behaviour contributes strongly to the culture for learning that is a feature of all classes. They work and play together very well.

The leadership and management of the school are good at all levels. The headteacher closely monitors the achievement of each individual pupil in reading, writing and mathematics through regular 'pupil progress interviews' with class teachers. This monitoring is effective because teachers know their pupils well and keep detailed records, therefore the discussions ensure that extra help is provided whenever it is needed as well as enabling the school to set challenging targets. However, at a whole-school level, the records of the periodic testing and assessment of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are ineffective in demonstrating the progress made.

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This is because the data entries are in different formats. In science, there is no whole-school overview of pupils' progress. However, individual teachers do have a clear idea of pupils' strengths and weaknesses as learners in this subject. Class teachers' record keeping in all subjects is good.

Despite the weaknesses in recording data at a whole-school level, the school's procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are good because they are based on clear records kept by class teachers and regular discussions about each individual pupil. These provide the basis for a clear plan of action. Governors play a full and active role in monitoring, supporting and challenging the school. The success of actions taken to secure improvement, for example in the development of the curriculum, show that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of marking of pupils' work by:
 - ensuring that teachers give clear guidance about precisely what pupils need to do next in order to improve their work
 - ensuring that, whenever appropriate, marking focuses on each individual pupil's termly targets
 - involving pupils more in evaluating their own efforts.
- Improve the whole-school system used for checking on pupils' achievement by ensuring that records of pupils' progress in science are kept, and that the data entered are in the same format in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

It was clear from the lessons observed during the inspection that all groups of pupils, regardless of gender, ability or background, learn well. Prior to the inspection, an analysis of data showed that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not do quite as well as their peers nationally in the 2009 national tests at the end of Year 6. However, in all of the lessons seen, these pupils were making good progress in line with their classmates. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, less able pupils played a full part in group discussions about the key features of advertisements and successfully answered challenging questions posed to the whole class about the persuasive nature of advertising. In Year 6, progress is rapidly accelerated. This occurs because of the consistently good teaching together with the wide range of extra measures designed to boost pupils' attainment. These include before-school and lunchtime group sessions and after-school individual tuition.

The excellent attendance rates reflect pupils' enjoyment of school. In discussions with the reporting inspector and in their responses to the inspection questionnaires an overwhelming majority of pupils expressed positive views about all aspects of the school. Typical of the comments made are: 'I think my school is great. I feel happy here' and 'I think that my teachers are really kind and friendly, they help us a lot'. One of the

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many things that pupils told inspectors they like about the school is that they feel really safe. Pupils' behaviour is rarely less than good and in closely supervised situations, such as in lessons, it is often impeccable. Pupils are not concerned about bullying. They say that instances of unacceptable behaviour are infrequent and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Maturely, they view these instances as 'part of growing up'. While pupils clearly know what they need to do to keep fit and healthy, they are the first to admit that they do not always put their learning into practice by helping to promote healthy lifestyles. The pupils are proud of their school, and the older ones in particular thrive on the opportunities provided to take responsibility, for instance as house captains, members of the school council, or as 'peace makers' by helping resolve any disagreements between pupils. Overall, pupils make a very good contribution to the day-to-day life of the school, but they are less involved in activities that have a positive impact within the local community.

A very clear moral code permeates all aspects of school life, and pupils are unfailingly polite and well mannered. Pupils are well prepared for life as future citizens. They have excellent social skills, which they demonstrate through their ability to work with others. Pupils' spiritual awareness, as seen in their understanding of their own development and appreciation of that of others, is satisfactory, as is their cultural awareness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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How effective is the provision?

There are many good features of teaching in all classes. Teachers have good skills in managing and organising their pupils, and ensure that lessons proceed at a good pace. They are skilled in providing clear explanations about new concepts because their knowledge of the subjects they teach is secure. For example, a science lesson in Year 5 was highly effective in developing pupils' skills as they investigated the porosity of different substances. This was because of the clear focus on scientific method and the teacher's skills in challenging pupils to explain the thinking behind the tests that they had constructed. In all lessons, teachers are generally good at providing achievable challenges for pupils, regardless of ability. Teaching assistants work well in partnership with the teachers. Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities benefit from good quality individual help which enables them to participate well.

The quality of academic guidance provided for pupils through teachers' marking of their work is not always effective in reinforcing learning. A scrutiny of pupils' books showed that the quality of marking varies from class to class and the comments made by teachers do not always result in improvements being made where they are needed.

The curriculum has been improved significantly since the last inspection. It is strongly based on first-hand experiences through a range of visits and visitors which add an extra dimension to pupils' learning. For example, a recent visit by Year 6 pupils to a dance studio together with the London performance of 'Les Miserables' added significantly to their interest in, and enjoyment of, their work about the French Revolution. The curriculum is effective in promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles during the school day and through a range of extra-curricular sporting activities. All pupils benefit from taking part in residential visits. For Year 6 pupils, the experience is shared with other pupils from the local 'cluster' of schools and the friendships made are an important part of their preparation for transfer to secondary education.

An outstanding feature of provision is the quality of day-to-day pastoral guidance and support provided for pupils. The needs of individuals are well known to all staff, and pupils feel valued as members of the school 'family'. There are excellent, well established arrangements to induct pupils into school and to ensure a smooth transition as they move on to the secondary phase of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

All of the pupils surveyed felt that the headteacher and senior staff are doing a good job. This reflects the pupils' appreciation that this is a very inclusive school in which discrimination has no place and which gives them a sense of belonging. The direction provided in embedding ambition and driving improvement stems from the good partnership between the headteacher and the governing body. The governing body is well led and organised. Governors are well informed and have clear strategies to improve the school by continuing to develop their own effectiveness.

The impact of the school's very close links with its 'partner' infant school is seen in the sharing of expertise and shared responsibility by members of staff in leading and managing different subjects. For example, the teacher responsible for music in the infant school makes an important contribution to provision in the junior school.

An overwhelming majority of the parents who returned the inspection questionnaires felt that the school is good at ensuring their children are safe. Inspectors agree. The pupils' safety and well-being have the highest priority, and all of the required checks on adults who have contact with children are securely in place.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. The school knows its own community very well and is developing links with other schools, including one in North Carolina, as well as building on established links with a school in Kenya in order to help broaden pupils' horizons.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

The rate of response to the inspection questionnaire was much higher than usual for a school of this size. A very large majority of parents and carers recorded positive views in each of the areas surveyed. The areas of most concern to parents related to communications with the school and the management of unacceptable behaviour.

Inspection evidence shows that the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is excellent and that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are extremely rare. Communications with parents are good. There is, for example, an 'open-door' policy and parents are warmly welcomed. The school website, however, is in need of improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Silverstone Church of England Junior 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	68	15	25	4	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	75	14	23	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	53	22	37	4	7	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	60	20	33	2	3	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	35	58	21	35	2	3	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	50	25	42	3	5	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	67	18	30	2	3	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)	39	65	17	28	2	3	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	57	21	35	3	5	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	53	22	37	4	7	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	48	24	40	5	8	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	37	62	17	28	4	7	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	47	41	47	3	3	2	2

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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 pupils' 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.



Monday 15 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Silverstone Church of England Junior School, Towcester, NN12 8ES

Thank you very much for being so helpful when I came to visit your school. I really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work. Your parents think that you go to a good school, and I agree.

Here is a list of some of the things I liked best.

By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, the standard of your work is above average.

You learn well in lessons and make good progress because you are taught well.

You develop your personal skills well. This is important in helping you to become good citizens in the future. I was particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way you get on well with each other.

You enjoy the interesting and exciting activities your teachers plan for you.

All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.

All of the adults who help run your school are doing a good job.

Every school has something that could be improved, and this is what I have asked your school to concentrate on to help you to do even better.

I would like your teachers to improve the way they mark your work by letting you know exactly what you need to do to improve it. I would like them to make sure that they always think about your targets when they are marking so that they can tell you how well you are doing in reaching them. I would also like them to involve you a lot more in deciding about how you could improve your work. I am sure that you are ready for this challenge!

I would also like your teachers to work out a way of measuring the progress you make in science, so that they can check on your progress just as well as they already do in reading, writing and mathematics. I would also like your headteacher to improve the way that the record of your progress is set out.

I wish you great success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector

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