

Sawtry Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110688
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	354315
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Malcolm Griffith
Headteacher	Steve West
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 19 lessons, observed 11 teachers, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. The team analysed 98 parental questionnaires, 109 responses to the pupil survey and 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- the impact of action being taken to improve attainment in writing
- how effectively teachers plan to meet varying needs and adopt teaching styles to engage the pupils
- the impact of the action to improve teaching and learning
- how well assessment data is used to track progress, identify where intervention is needed and help pupils to meet their targets.

Information about the school

Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection in this above average sized school, but they have stabilised over the last two years. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy and autistic spectrum disorder. There have been significant staff changes recently. The headteacher was appointed in January 2009 and a new deputy headteacher started in September of the same year. The school has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark and has achieved Healthy Schools status. The school hosts a privately run after school club, which is inspected separately.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Sawtry Junior is a satisfactory school. There are strengths in its provision, of which the most significant is the quality of support and guidance for pupils, particularly for the more vulnerable such as those with more acute learning difficulties. Staff and governors are committed to the inclusion of all pupils in school activities whatever their specific needs. They have achieved notable success in integrating pupils on the autistic spectrum into the life of the school by carefully managing and supporting their development and behaviour. Good use is made of external expertise, such as specialist teachers who work with these pupils and provide training for staff to support specific learning needs.

Pupils are polite and welcoming, friendly to each other and respectful of all members of the school community. They say incidents of bullying are rare and that, 'Teachers always stop it quickly'. The school provides a safe and welcoming learning environment for all pupils. One result is that pupils say they feel safe and can go to an adult if they have a problem. This view is echoed by parents in their responses to the questionnaire, such as when one wrote, 'We feel that Sawtry Junior provides an excellent environment in which to learn.' Pupils attend regularly and mostly behave well. They understand how to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle and contribute significantly to the school and to the local community. Carefully planned transition arrangements ease the pupils' entry into secondary school, and the strengthening links with the feeder infant school are providing greater continuity to the pupils' experiences.

From above average attainment on entry, pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment is above average, but fell in 2009, particularly in writing, which has been the subject of subsequent attention this year. Improvements are evident from the action taken to increase the pupils' progress in both English and mathematics, but writing remains the area where pupils make the slowest progress. The main reasons for this are that pupils have insufficient opportunities for extended writing and to develop their skills in a range of subjects and contexts, and they are not always clear about the steps they should take to achieve their individual targets.

Although achievement is satisfactory, the quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school, so that the pupils make uneven progress. In the most effective lessons, teachers generate pace and enthusiasm for learning by adopting a variety of interesting activities and ensuring that all pupils participate in discussions. However, this does not happen in all classes. At times, teaching does not engage the interest of the pupils and can lead to a loss of concentration and a slowing of progress.

The new leadership team is now established and is starting to have some impact on raising the pupils' achievement. Leaders and governors have a broad understanding of

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the school's qualities, but self-evaluation is not yet sufficiently incisive as leaders have only just begun to focus on assessing the impact of planned actions.

Priorities are largely appropriate given the school's current performance, but their impact has yet to be seen in sustained improvements in teaching and the pupils' achievement. For these reasons, the school's capacity to improve is only satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote the development of writing across subjects and in a wider range of contexts. Ensure that pupils are clear about their targets and receive clear written feedback on how to achieve them.
- Accelerate the pupils' progress and engage them further in the learning process by:
 - using more effective questioning techniques to engage pupils and check their understanding
 - enabling pupils to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support learning more consistently
 - involving pupils in assessing their own progress and that of their peers.
- In order to raise the quality of teaching, school leaders should:
 - identify and share with all staff the key features of good and better learning
 - identify where teachers' skills need improving and provide tailored professional development
 - establish a programme where teachers can develop their skills by observing best practice.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

From above average in 2008, results for Year 6 pupils in the national tests fell in 2009, particularly in English, and were broadly average in all areas. However, evidence indicates that the current attainment of pupils is on track to reverse this decline. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets overall, although progress is very impressive for some individual pupils.

Lesson observations show that pupils learn and develop their understanding at a satisfactory rate. They are keen to do well and most persevere with the tasks they are given, such as when Year 5 pupils generated thoughtful ideas for story settings in response to a painting of a tiger in a tropical storm by Rousseau. When the opportunity arises, as in this lesson, teamwork and collaboration enable the pupils to share ideas and learn through discussion and by working together on tasks.

Pupils learn how to deal with risks faced in their everyday lives, such as through road

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safety training, cycling proficiency and when using new technology. Healthy Living Day helped to promote the pupils' awareness of the importance of regular exercise and a balanced diet. Attendance at the school's sports clubs and lunchtime activities is high. The pupils have an influence on school life when acting as representatives on the council or as play-leaders. The 'buddy system' with older and younger pupils reading together helps to promote close relationships between pupils of all ages. Pupils contribute to village life and raise funds for charities. Their respect for the customs and cultures of others is strengthened through sponsoring a children's home in India, which gives them an appreciation of the world beyond their immediate area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is not consistently benefiting learning across the school. Pupils' learning develops well in the most effective lessons through paired talk and group work and when questions are used to engage the pupils and check their understanding. This style, and the engaging presence of the teacher, drove learning forward at pace in a Year 5 lesson as pupils developed persuasive arguments for and against school clubs and

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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residential trips. The teacher showed how much she valued everyone's ideas and used them to help to frame the argument into statements to inform the debate. However, these techniques are limited in other lessons when teachers take answers only from pupils who have their hands up. While the majority of the support staff work effectively with individuals or groups, on occasions they are not deployed to the best effect.

Marking is too variable and does not consistently provide pupils with sufficient feedback on how to improve the quality of their written work and meet their targets to improve. Furthermore, pupils do not always have enough opportunity to assess their own work or that of their peers.

Linking learning between subjects is developing and the pupils' experiences are enriched by well attended clubs, educational visits such as to Ramsey Heights to put their study on water into a real life context, and visits to school by theatre groups. Partnerships with other providers, including the technology challenge day at the local secondary school, help to extend talented pupils. Appropriate attention is paid to teaching key skills but not consistently to developing literacy and numeracy across subjects. Furthermore, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their ICT skills to support their learning across a range of subjects.

Members of staff know the pupils and their circumstances well and use assessment information increasingly effectively to identify where additional support is needed for pupils to meet their targets. Any learning difficulties are identified early and support carefully targeted or programmes adapted to meet their needs. Utilising close links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that a consistent approach is taken to supporting their development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has developed a clear vision for taking the school forward, but the changes needed have not had time to filter through into improved performance. Other school leaders are taking on an increasingly pivotal role in leading developments in their areas. Together, they recognise that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are slowing the progress of pupils across the school and are working for their eradication. Supporting teachers to develop their skills through further training has started, but this has not had time to lead to substantial and sustained improvement in the work of all staff or enabled them to learn by working with and observing others.

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The governing body is well led and provides a balance of challenge and support for the school and its new leadership team. Governors rigorously ensure that everyone works in a safe environment, and that all arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of the pupils are fully met so that anyone working with children in the school is properly vetted. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress but, as some have pointed out, their views are not sought systematically and used to inform priorities for development.

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling any discrimination are at the heart of all that the school does. One result is that this is a cohesive school where everyone feels valued. Senior leaders and governors understand the context within which the school operates and have implemented various activities to help promote community cohesion. However, they have not evaluated the impact of their work sufficiently so that they can identify what should be done next or looked at how they might influence the world beyond the immediate locality. Links with outside organisations give good value for money as the school would not be able to support pupils or enrich their experiences without their additional expertise.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents are happy with most aspects of the school but a small minority have concerns about others. Almost all report that their children enjoy school and feel safe. While parents feel teaching is good, the inspection team found it to be satisfactory. Inspection evidence supports the view of parents that the school helps their children to have a

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healthy lifestyle. Inspection evidence does not support the views of parents who feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. It strives with success to be inclusive, particularly for pupils with specific needs that can affect their behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sawtry 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 265 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	41	56	57	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	48	49	47	48	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	31	63	64	4	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	30	61	62	5	5	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	30	31	61	62	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	28	62	63	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	30	64	65	2	2	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)	23	23	62	63	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	28	61	62	7	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	24	54	55	11	11	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	23	58	59	10	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	30	55	56	7	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	35	56	57	4	4	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



14 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sawtry Junior School, Sawtry, PE28 5SH

You will remember that inspectors visited your school recently and I am writing to let you know what we found out. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts about your school. We had the opportunity to talk with many of you and we told your teachers you were very helpful and polite.

We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take good care of you. You behave well and those of you who have special jobs, like members of the school council or play-leaders, carry out your duties responsibly. You make satisfactory progress during your time in school. Most of you reach and many exceed the standards expected by the time you leave in Year 6.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. The three things we have asked them to do are to:

- provide you with more opportunities to develop your writing skills and help you to understand how to improve your written work
- plan lessons to help all of you learn better, involve you more in your learning and use your computer skills more
- improve your progress by helping teachers to develop their teaching skills by sharing their good ideas and skills with each other.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show pride in your school and working hard.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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