



# Swiss Cottage School

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 100096  
**Local Authority** Camden  
**Inspection number** 285715  
**Inspection dates** 7–8 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Judith Charlesworth

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Avenue Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–16		NW8 6HX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7681 8080
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	143	<b>Fax number</b>	020 7681 8082
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Ms Philippa Gitlin
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Kay Bedford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2002		

---

<b>Age group</b> 2–16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7–8 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 285715
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

---

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Swiss Cottage caters for learners with a very wide range of complex needs including learning, communication, physical, emotional, behavioural and autistic spectrum disorders. Attainment on entry tends to be well below average for learners' age, and the complexity of their needs on entry is increasing. The school includes a special nursery which assesses children to determine in which school their needs will best be met at the age of five. The school provides a range of additional services to the learners and their families including after-school and holiday activities, and is involved with a number of schools, colleges and government-led projects. Swiss Cottage is a specialist special school for cognition and learning and has received a number of awards and accolades over the past eight years including Outstanding School (Ofsted), Beacon school and various curriculum awards. Consultation is currently underway to rebuild the school and alter its remit as part of local reorganisation of special school provision.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Swiss Cottage is an outstanding school. Provision in the Foundation Stage and main school are equally good. The last two Ofsted inspections also judged it to be outstanding. Nevertheless, Swiss Cottage has continued to improve because of its commitment to provide the best for its learners. As a result, their achievement and personal development are excellent. They learn to stay safe and healthy and become ready for fulfilled, independent adult lives. Learners clearly enjoy school very much. Their behaviour is excellent, attendance is good and exclusions are low. Whilst the standards learners attain are well below average, meticulous assessment and value-added data shows that individuals make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Swiss Cottage's success derives from outstanding leadership and management, a commitment to staff development and training, and strong personal relationships underpinned by a code of conduct for both staff and learners. There have been three overarching improvements since the last inspection. The first has been the way in which leadership and management are now distributed throughout the school. All members of staff have responsibility for learners' achievement, and the school has an extensive range of very well monitored systems to ensure that learners' needs are consistently and effectively addressed. A new management structure including additional senior staff appointments has been introduced which reflects the equal weight given to learners' personal and learning needs. All staff, including therapy and support staff, work seamlessly and successfully together to provide high quality education and care.

The second improvement has been in the continual refinement of the many effective systems and practices underlying the school's provision. This is based on extensive self-evaluation, and includes the views of pupils, parents and other school partners. In addition, the school seeks to introduce any national developments and initiatives that will be of benefit. The result is that even though the quality of teaching, curriculum, support, care and guidance are all already outstanding, the school is continually sharpening its provision.

The third major development in the last few years is the extension of the school's influence in the community. Swiss Cottage is highly inclusive. It supports its learners in various beneficial community situations and welcomes staff and students from other schools and colleges. The senior sports co-ordinator works with a number of other schools, staff advise mainstream colleagues on techniques to support learning and behaviour management and the headteacher is a leader in a number of government initiatives such as the London Challenge and the London Centre for Leadership in Learning.

Extensive personal support and activities are arranged for parents which have a positive impact on relationships and the achievement of their children. Parents say they particularly enjoy 'family learning days' in which families are invited to school to join in a range of enjoyable activities. A large number of inspection questionnaires was

returned and indicate parents' extremely high satisfaction with every aspect of the school. One parent wrote 'My son has made huge progress academically and socially since starting at Swiss Cottage school three years ago. He cannot bear to miss a day, he loves it so much. This is down to the excellent leadership and the enthusiasm and professionalism of all the staff. We cannot praise the school enough.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

The school has already identified and planned for a number of further improvements. These include the developments that will be needed when its remit changes. As a next step, the school should concentrate on developing its provision and practice to meet the changing needs of the school population.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Learners' attainment on entry ranges from very low to below average. The school has long-standing, robust systems which track the learners' progress over time by national benchmarked scales. The data show that learners throughout the school make excellent progress. Standards attained are overall well below average as is to be expected in a special school for children with complex learning difficulties. However, a few attain broadly average standards and all leave the school at 16 with accreditation in a number of subjects. The assessment information is used very effectively to plan teaching for further learning, and is vital to the assessment process in the nursery class. It is used to set challenging targets for the school, and is rigorously evaluated to identify any underachievement which is then competently addressed. For example, a Learning Mentor post was created to help address underachievement in learners from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing a range of pastoral supports. On a more focused level, underachievement in boys' writing is being very successfully addressed through staff training, extra resources and curriculum development.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The learners' personal development, well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all outstanding. Parents confirm this through their written comments and interactions with staff. The excellent relationships between learners and with staff underpin learners' outstanding behaviour, enjoyment and willingness to conform and take part in all that is offered. Learners' self-esteem and insight into their own strengths and weaknesses increase as they mature and develop empathy, compassion and real tolerance of others. The school is a strong, democratic community in which the learners' voice is frequently sought and always listened to. Learners understand and take responsibility for making amends for any mistakes. Their own evaluations show that they very much enjoy events that contribute to their social development and to the community as a whole. For example, monthly nominations are given by Key Stage 3 and 4 learners for a student worthy of the Jack Petchey award (a London schools'

initiative). Many names are put forward, and a spontaneous cheer of support went up when this month's winner was announced. Where they can, learners make healthy choices about food, sport and leisure activities. They recognise how to live by the school's moral code and behave safely. Bullying and harassment are rare and not tolerated by the staff or learners themselves. Learners understand the type of behaviour that is appropriate to live successfully out of school. Learners' cultural diversity and willingness to share life experiences support their cultural development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching in all parts of the school is outstanding. The robust systems and practices that underlie the school's high quality provision come together in the classroom and ensure that learners achieve their best. As a result of careful assessment, staff have detailed knowledge of each individual so that their personal learning needs are very well planned for and consistently addressed. There is provision through all aspects of work for learners' personal development and care, and outstanding team work between staff members ensures that learners' needs are properly met. In general, teaching assistants' work is of high quality. However, very occasionally, newer teaching assistants show they are less practised than more experienced colleagues at taking learners' personal, educational and therapy needs into account simultaneously. This is being effectively addressed by training. Lessons are structured so that learners know exactly what they must do and include very good support in terms they understand, reinforced by signing, symbols, photographs, explanations and the good use of resources.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Swiss Cottage provides an outstanding curriculum. Considerable thought has gone into making sure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners of all ages and developmental stages. Physical education and sport, for example, are given high priority. They are seen as fundamental to helping learners stay safe and healthy, giving them a feeling of well-being and helping them to concentrate in other lessons. They also provide excellent opportunities for community involvement. Curriculum planning is excellent. It includes the latest initiatives, such as the 'Birth to Three Matters' curriculum for the nursery group, and has different arrangements for different subjects and age groups. The English curriculum is supported by exceptionally helpful documentation to support both assessment and planning for learning. Similar material for mathematics is being developed. An appropriately strong emphasis is given to the core skills of English, mathematics, information and communication technology and personal, social health and citizenship education. Life skills, the world of work and preparation for further education are given appropriate emphasis at Key Stage 4. The curriculum in a number of subjects, such as history, concentrates on the development of skills which are transferable into any situation and are of more use to learners than

the acquisition of knowledge alone. There is excellent curriculum enrichment through partnerships with parents, schools, colleges, arts and sports providers, and visits, including a range of residential visits. The school fully recognises that the increasingly complex needs of learners will necessitate changes to the curriculum in the near future.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This outstanding area of the school's work is paramount to the learners' academic achievement and personal development. Excellent relationships support both aspects and are the keystone principle of the school. Swiss Cottage provides a safe, supportive but empowering environment. Learners are given excellent support and guidance and successfully meet challenging learning and behaviour targets. An increasing range of therapy support, including psychotherapy, is given to assure their well-being.

Arrangements for safeguarding the learners are robust. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and adhered to; child protection is very well attended to, and the health and safety of pupils is given high priority. All required checks on staff are carried out and documented and the school is in the process of converting these records into a single register to meet current government requirements. Learners are very well prepared for each transition in their schooling, for example, in and out of school and between departments, and so for taking their place in society as young adults. The curriculum and ethos of the school give excellent support for learners' growing appreciation of how to make healthy and safe choices and contribute to the school and wider community. Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress and school business through a range of written and face to face procedures, which vary according to the age and developmental stage of the learner. Parents' views of many aspects of the school's work are gathered and acted upon, and parents say they always feel listened to, valued and supported.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are exceptionally strong and successfully dispersed throughout the staff so that all have responsibility for learners' achievement. The school monitors and evaluates all aspects of its work extensively and accurately in order to improve its quality further, and the process itself continues to be refined. For example, learners now regularly evaluate their own performance and peer-evaluation has just begun. Governance is fully effective and in recent years, governors have developed a better understanding of school practices by becoming more involved in school life, for example, by conducting exit interviews and visiting classes regularly. They now provide suitable challenge to the senior leaders and have a higher profile amongst the parents. Finances are very well used. When a need is identified to enhance the school's provision, any budget shortfalls are very effectively supplemented by grants, sponsors and fund-raising. For example, a new teaching post was created to provide learners with autistic spectrum disorders and the staff who teach them with

professional support. This has resulted in improved achievement for these learners. The school has excellent relationships with its various partners and is extensively used to improve and develop practice locally and further afield. The effectiveness of school improvement since the last inspection and the clear direction the school is taking towards greater excellence indicate an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
---	-----------------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for letting me come into your lessons and assemblies when I visited your school earlier this week, and a special thanks to the young man whose annual review I attended and to the older learners who made that delicious lasagne I had for lunch. I came to Swiss Cottage to see how it was working and how well you were all doing, and I was very pleased with what I found. I agree with the school staff and your parents that it is an outstanding school.

I think that the headteacher and staff all work very hard to help you stay safe and healthy, enjoy your work and prepare you for the next stage in your lives. The teaching is excellent and you make very good progress as a result. I could see from the staff's records how well your English and mathematics skills develop, and the Jack Petchey assembly showed clearly how well you support one another and the school community as a whole. I think that your behaviour and relationships with one another are excellent, and I could see how well you are learning to stay calm and concentrate in lessons. It is also clear how well the school staff and therapists work together to help you and your families. I know that the school listens to what you have to say, and I have seen all the positive comments you make about school when you evaluate your activities.

The school gives you a wide range of very interesting things to do. I thought that the decision to make a comic strip using photos, artwork and creative writing about the snowy day we had was brilliant! It will make it a day to remember in more ways than one. The school makes really good use of the community and staff and students from other schools and colleges to make learning more fun and interesting for you. I could see how much you enjoyed working with some of these students in PE.

In all, I think you are very fortunate to attend Swiss Cottage School. It gives you an excellent start in life, and if you continue to work hard and choose safe and healthy options, you will have every chance of success in your adult lives. I wish you all the best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth Lead inspector