

Swarcliffe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107944
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309543
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Swallow

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Oddy
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Swarcliffe is an average sized school on the eastern outskirts of Leeds. Since the previous inspection the school has experienced significant changes in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher and senior leadership team. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has Healthy Schools Status Level 2, Active Sports Mark, Inclusion Chartermark and the Investors in People award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an improving school that provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school. They say that in recent years, 'The school has gone from strength to strength.' and that, 'It is a school that always listens to the children and parents.' The headteacher and committed staff work hard to create a happy and inclusive environment, in which all pupils feel valued and enjoy their learning. In particular, the headteacher has shown determination to address the challenges arising from recent and significant changes in staffing to raise achievement and standards. As a result measures to improve pupils' writing skills and to respond to the marked decline in Year 6 performance in mathematics in 2006 are now successful features of the school's work.

Most staff are actively involved in checking pupils' progress to ensure that none are left behind. Self-evaluation is accurate and has identified the right priorities to sustain improvement. For example, the school recognises correctly that there is more work to be done to increase standards in writing and mathematics. Teachers work in teams to share good practice, with a real determination to try and make sure that every lesson is the best it can be. Parents recognise this good work. They say that their children are given 'lots of encouragement to do well in all subjects' and that they 'enjoy the regular access to up to date technology'.

Standards in the current Year 6 are improving, but are still below average in English and mathematics. This represents good achievement overall for these pupils, from their well below average starting points in reading, writing and number work. Nevertheless, standards can improve further. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, due to the supportive relationships, many opportunities for independent play and well-planned activities to develop their communication and social skills. Across the rest of the school, in Years 1 to 6, pupils are now making good progress overall, as a result of the largely good teaching. However, on occasions where teaching is insufficiently challenging or engaging, pupils learning slows and their progress is satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) and an emphasis on speaking and listening activities, encourage pupils to think for themselves. The curriculum is good. Pupils are excited by the regular theme days, visits and visitors to the school and by the opportunities to use their imagination and develop their creative talents.

Pupils' personal development is good overall and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils really enjoy school and their behaviour is good. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and make outstanding contributions to the life of the school and the local community. They are well prepared for life beyond school because of their good ICT skills, improving levels of literacy and numeracy skills and positive attitudes to learning. The quality of care and guidance is good. Pastoral care is excellent. The school provides increasingly helpful information so that parents know how well their children are doing and pupils understand the next steps they need to take to improve their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are challenged and supported well in all lessons and make good progress.

The good leadership by the headteacher and senior leadership team, and the developing strengths of the governing body, have led to some recent successes in raising standards. Consequently, the school shows good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with skills that are well below national expectations, particularly their personal and communication skills. They settle happily and get off to a good start. Good teaching across the Foundation Stage enables them to make good progress. By the end of Reception, although children reach skill levels that are overall broadly typical for their age, levels remain lower in personal and mathematical development. The stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments encourage children to make choices, learn to share with others and become increasingly independent in their work and play. The easy access between indoor and outdoor activities is particularly strong, and promotes continuous hands-on experiences. Children enjoy, and are enthusiastic, about their learning. Systems to assess children's progress are good and their welfare is very well promoted. Those who find learning more difficult make good progress because of the well-conceived opportunities to play actively and interact with adults who are good role models. The quality of questioning challenges children to think for themselves and to develop confidence in sharing ideas in front of others. Recent changes in the leadership of the Nursery, and overall Foundation Stage, have brought about considerable improvements in children's learning and personal development in a short time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in English and mathematics across the school and particularly by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure all teaching is sufficiently challenging to engage pupils in their learning and enable them to make the best possible progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils now make increasingly good progress across the school in relation to their starting points on entry to the school, which are well below those expected for their age. Standards are below average in English and mathematics in the current Year 6. Additional strategies to boost pupils' performances in mathematics have reversed the significant decline in standards in 2006 and the school's most recent information shows that increasing numbers of pupils are set to reach the nationally expected levels this summer. Similarly, the school's detailed tracking systems and new approaches to teaching key writing skills are showing enhanced outcomes in English across most years. Achievement in ICT is particularly high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the extra support they receive. The school sets increasingly challenging targets to raise attainment and is now making progress towards reaching them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They really appreciate the wide range of enrichment opportunities offered to them and take full advantage. All participate in high quality sporting and other physical activities both in lessons and during play-times. They also make well informed choices from the nutritious selections of food offered. As a result, their adoption of healthy life styles is outstandingly well developed. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and often exemplary. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Pupils value the

many chances they have to take on positions of responsibility, such as sports leaders and leading the whole school in the daily 'wake up and shake' routine. As a result, they grow in maturity and confidence. Because the school is effective in teaching about relationships and making the right kinds of decisions, pupils support each other well, in a harmonious and happy learning community. Their understanding of moral, social, world and environmental issues is outstanding, due to the range of creative experiences offered to them. Their spiritual development is equally outstanding due to the many opportunities to reflect on personal, community and world issues, including the sponsorship of a young person in Benin. Pupils economic and workplace skills are developing well, particularly in ICT, and their literacy and numeracy skills are improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are well taught and are enthusiastic learners. The school has been particularly successful in improving learning by providing increased opportunities for pupils to become independent learners and to talk about and explain their understanding. This is particularly evident in the new ways in which mathematics is taught, with a sharp focus on developing mathematical understanding. Where learning is at its best, pupils work at a fast pace on really interesting tasks that fully engage them and that match their needs. They are given the chance to discuss their learning tasks, which are based on topics to which pupils can really relate. In a small proportion of satisfactory lessons, not enough attention is paid to matching tasks to the needs of pupils of all abilities. Consequently, not all pupils are sufficiently engaged and challenged accordingly and progress is satisfactory. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these pupils thrive as a result. Specialist teaching in Spanish significantly enhances pupils' learning about different cultures and their beliefs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Recent changes to the curriculum ensure that it provides enjoyment through a developing range of themes and hands-on activities. It increasingly links subjects together so that pupils steadily acquire relevant knowledge and understanding. Good emphasis is placed on promoting key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, as well as an ability to work cooperatively in teams. These approaches prepare pupils well for their future lives. Teachers make effective use of speaking and listening activities to improve pupils' self-esteem and confidence, as well as essential writing techniques. A half-termly whole school focus, such as the Olympic Games, means that imaginative learning experiences, anchored in real events, are increasingly common. All pupils have regular Spanish lessons and visitors to the school, concerts, performances and visits out of school, including residential visits, are the norm. Good personal, social and emotional development lies at the heart of the school's curriculum. This develops pupils' self-worth and promotes effort and achievement. The many popular clubs, such as film, dance, drama, yoga, and a wealth of sporting activities, are good features of the school's work in that they help pupils to broaden their horizons and develop healthy and varied lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All adults in this caring school are deeply committed to the support they give to pupils, and this is central to their good achievement and personal development. As a result, all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, feel safe and grow as confident learners and young people. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of a particularly high quality. Pupils say they feel safe, that bullying is not a problem and that they are confident to talk to teachers about any concerns. The 'buddy' system and use of peers as role models are effective arrangements in dealing with emotional problems. There are good procedures in place to ensure pupils' health and safety, on site and beyond, and safeguarding measures meet statutory guidelines. Informative marking and good guidance from teachers enable most pupils to understand what to do to improve their work. There are effective systems for checking the progress that pupils make, quickly identifying underachievement and dealing with it. However, these systems are relatively new and, as yet, have not had a full impact on raising pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has been responsible for the enriched learning experiences for every child, which are central to the growing success of the school. The way staff use the detailed systems to track closely pupils' progress, and the provision of more bespoke support programmes, are bringing about improvements in achievement and standards in most areas of the school. Senior school leaders support fully the headteacher's drive to develop enthusiastic and independent young people. They play a major role in assessing the quality of pupils' outcomes and developing a culture in which teachers plan together and exchange good practice. Staff share the headteacher's vision for an inclusive and high achieving school. They say they feel involved in all aspects of the school's work. Self-evaluation is accurate and detailed and action plans identify the correct priorities, based on a thorough audit of performance. However, whilst there are regular procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching, the analysis of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is not as strong as it might be. As such, this is not yet leading to high levels of consistently good practice, for example, in ensuring all lessons are sufficiently challenging for pupils. Governors are supportive of the school and carry out their responsibilities effectively. They are growing in confidence and beginning to understand how well the school is performing and to challenge whether overall achievement is high enough.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so helpful during the recent inspection of your school. We were impressed with how welcoming you are to visitors and how well you get on with each other. Your behaviour is good and the staff look after you well. There is a really friendly atmosphere in school. We feel sure that this helps you to give of your best.

You go to a good school and you clearly benefit from the many interesting things on offer. The morning 'wake up and shake' and afternoon yoga routines are really impressive. We were pleased to see how many of you enjoy sport, drama and musical activities, the regular visits to places of interest and the exciting insights into life in different countries through Spanish lessons and the links with a young person in Benin. We were impressed by the quality of information and communication technology on display and by your new gardening equipment. We can see why you like your teachers so much and why you regularly attend school.

Many of you are now making good progress in English and mathematics. We think you can do even better and reach higher standards by the time you leave the school at the end of Year 6. We have therefore asked your headteacher to make sure that this happens. Most of your lessons challenge you in your work and help you to make good progress. All of your lessons should be like this and we have therefore asked all your teachers to make sure that this happens. You can help by continuing to work really hard and by always responding positively to the suggestions your teachers make to improve your work.