

Four Swannes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117092
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312485
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Jean Moon
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Jones
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	King Edward Road Waltham Cross Hertfordshire EN8 7HH
Telephone number	01992763939
Fax number	01992714420

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school with a part-time Nursery is in an area where some families experience considerable social and economic disadvantage. Free school meal eligibility is above average and the proportion of pupils who leave or join during their school career is increasing. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average and nearly a fifth of all pupils are at an early stage of learning English. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's attainment when they join the Nursery and Reception classes is well below the level expected for their age, especially in communication and language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspection confirms the school's view that it provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. This is achieved against a backdrop of the challenging circumstances of low attainment on entry, high pupil mobility and problems of staff recruitment. It is down to sound leadership, the drive of the headteacher and the growing stability of the senior team that the impact of these difficulties is kept to a satisfactory minimum. However, the school's capacity for further improvement is only satisfactory because it relies too heavily on the small senior leadership team. The headteacher is keen to involve other staff in leadership roles in order to improve pupils' achievement more quickly.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6 because teaching is satisfactory. Many lessons are taught well, particularly in the Foundation Stage, but teaching in Years 1 to 6 does not consistently drive learning forward at the pace needed for pupils to make good progress. Changes in teaching staff and pupil mobility have interrupted the consistency of learning. This has limited the degree of progress made by many pupils. Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. There has been a strong emphasis on improving achievement in English and mathematics. This has proved successful but there has been limited improvement in science and here pupils' progress is too slow.

Parents are happy that the welfare of their children is of prime importance to the school. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and provide a good level of care and support. The high priority placed on their personal development has a beneficial effect on the pupils' behaviour. They feel safe and know adults will listen to their concerns. Pupils know how to stay healthy and enjoy participating in a wide range of physical activities. Sport features strongly and promotes their physical development well. A gardening club encourages pupils to care for their environment. The school kitchen uses the vegetables they grow when preparing the pupils' dinners. Events such as 'Citizenship Day' encourage pupils to take an active part in their local community. The school council provides a forum for pupils to express their views and develop their leadership skills. They have raised money to purchase play equipment for use during lunchtimes and have organised a 'Healthy Food' week. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and helping others less fortunate through organising regular charity fundraising events. This helps them to appreciate their responsibilities to the wider community. These personal qualities and satisfactory academic progress give the pupils a sound footing for the next stage of their education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and some, but not all, reach the expected goals by the end of Reception. Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery. This is because the staff team have created a stimulating and vibrant environment, which encourages pupils to explore and investigate. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy school and achieve well. Staff promote a constructive dialogue between home and school, for example by making home visits. This helps children settle quickly when they start Nursery.

This good start continues in Reception, because the teacher's high expectations and well-planned activities meet the needs of all learners. Planned improvements to the outdoor area have not been completed. This currently limits opportunities to link learning between the indoor and

outdoor areas. Children for whom English is not their home language make good progress because of the caring support they receive from the bilingual teaching assistant and staff. Children are immersed in language, which helps to develop their speaking and listening skills rapidly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in science so that they make similar progress as in English and mathematics.
- Strengthen teaching in Years 1 to 6 by bringing greater pace to lessons.
- Ensure that leadership at all levels supports the drive to improve pupils' achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The children's good achievement in the Foundation Stage is built on in Years 1 to 6, but progress is less rapid. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are making satisfactory progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics in these year groups. Those learning English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress, but for many this becomes more rapid once they have developed a degree of fluency. The results of Year 2 assessments have fluctuated but have been consistently below average. Year 6 test results show that standards are also below average but that there has been steady improvement in English. These results represent satisfactory progress for most pupils. The longer a pupil spends at the school, the better they progress. Consequently, most reach the reasonably challenging targets set for them. However, the action taken to improve achievement in science has not had sufficient effect and it remains the weakest of the core subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy most aspects of school life, particularly the increased number and range of clubs and enrichment activities. The warm relationships between staff and pupils create a positive environment, which promotes good behaviour and fosters pupils' self-esteem. There are many opportunities for pupils to work in small groups.

Most cooperate well and work productively together. Attendance is improving and the school is working hard to ensure that pupils arrive punctually. Because of the well-planned opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils learn about and respect the views, values and beliefs of others. In assemblies, lessons and around the school, pupils respond sensitively to one another and there are many opportunities for quiet reflection. The harvest assembly was a good example of this, where the pupils were genuinely pleased by the contribution of others, including the very youngest.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are generally clear about what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they know if they have done it well. Teachers and support staff work well as a team. Teachers deploy their teaching assistants effectively to support particular pupils in lessons or to work with groups on specific programmes. Pupils enjoy discussing their work with others and assessing how well they are doing. For example, in a Year 4 writing lesson pupils were learning how to evaluate each other's work constructively and use this to improve its quality. However, some teachers do not use lesson time effectively and so their lessons lack the drive necessary to move pupils' learning forward at pace. There is also scope for teachers to make better use of new technology, such as interactive whiteboards and laptop computers, to make learning more interesting.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. The development of basic skills has improved, but there are still too few opportunities for enquiry and investigation in science. The curriculum fosters pupils' personal development effectively, through the well-planned personal, social and health education programme. Educational visits, visitors, theme days and clubs add to the quality of pupils' learning, promote enjoyment and make a positive contribution to their academic and personal development. Support programmes for pupils who have fallen behind or who have learning difficulties are having a positive impact on their achievement. Small group activities for pupils who are learning English are effective and help them to develop fluency and confidence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive a good standard of care, guidance and support. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are well looked after by all adults. Staff understand the child protection procedures and all requirements for safeguarding children are met. The school records and reviews pupils' progress regularly. This helps teachers provide support and guidance, and helps identify at an early stage any pupils who are at risk of underachieving or who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils have targets for their learning, and are generally involved in reviewing their progress. This helps them to see what they need to do to improve. Pupils benefit from some helpful marking. However, guidance from teachers does not always result in the best possible progress for pupils, because it is not clearly and consistently linked to pupils' improvement targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher receives good support from her senior team in giving a clear direction to raise pupils' achievement. Intensive support from the local authority has helped staff to focus on

the key steps needed to improve their performance. Consequently, the school has some success, for example in the steady improvements in English. The school bases its target setting on a satisfactory analysis of the pupils' performance, although its current impact is to maintain satisfactory achievement rather than acting as a lever to accelerate progress. School self-evaluation is generally accurate but is largely undertaken by the headteacher and her deputy. This gives a satisfactory picture of the school's qualities. However, it does not lead to sharply focused plans for its improvement, because the contribution of other staff with subject leadership responsibilities is too limited. This accounts, in part, for the relative lack of success in raising standards in science. Although governance is satisfactory, the governing body relies heavily on a small core group of governors who give much time and support to the school. The governing body as a whole does not have secure systems by which it can evaluate how the school is performing. This limits their understanding of what needs to be done to improve provision and raise standards further.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

1 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Four Swannes Primary School, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire, EN8 7HH

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school. You were all very helpful. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn.

The youngest of you make a good start in Nursery and Reception. The rest of you make satisfactory progress during your time at school. You enjoy school, attend regularly, work hard and behave sensibly. You clearly enjoy the clubs, trips and visits provided for you. The care and support you receive help you to settle in and make the school feel like one big family. You have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school better. We think that there are things that can be even better so we have asked your teachers to:

- give you more opportunities to learn science through investigations
- help you to learn more quickly in all classrooms
- take a greater part in helping the headteacher to make sure that you all do as well as you can.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector