

St Swithun's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122789
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314402
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Tony Walker
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Pullin (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Grove Street Retford Nottinghamshire DN22 6LD
Telephone number	01777 702043
Fax number	01777 705280

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school, situated in the centre of Retford, serves a community with high levels of social disadvantage. The school experiences much pupil mobility. Virtually all pupils come from White British backgrounds and nearly all have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who take free school meals is high. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The attainment of pupils starting Nursery is well below that typical for children of this age. The leadership and management of the school are temporary, with the deputy headteacher as acting headteacher. A new headteacher will join the school after Easter 2008. The school has gained Healthy School Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is good because pupils achieve well in academic and personal development, and the school provides a good quality of education. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection and staff have worked hard to enable pupils to achieve as well as they do. Starting from a very low baseline, standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are average. Last year's end of Key Stage 2 tests saw a significant improvement in English over the previous year and test results were average, whilst those in mathematics and science were below. The school has worked effectively to address this situation and standards in Year 6 now match those expected in English, mathematics and science. Targets for the end of year tests in Year 6 predict average results in all three subjects.

Teaching is good. Teachers mostly use assessment information to target work well to meet pupils' individual needs. Occasionally, the same work is given to everyone regardless of ability and this impedes learning. Good assessment and tracking systems are in place to monitor progress but the quality of marking and feedback to pupils is inconsistent and does not always inform them about the next steps they need to take to improve. The school provides a rich curriculum and this is in part due to good partnerships with others, particularly the high school and the family of primary schools to which St Swithun's belongs. These links encompass a range of subjects, but particularly physical education and foreign languages. They support pupils' personal development well.

The school is very caring and pupils feel supported and safe whilst there. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is in line with the national average but the vast majority of pupils attend regularly. The Healthy Schools Award has benefited pupils greatly. They have a good knowledge of how to eat healthily and take advantage of the opportunities to stay physically fit. Pupils contribute well to the friendly and secure atmosphere in the school through the work of the school council and other chances to take responsibility.

Leadership and management are effective in improving key areas of the school. Over the last two years, there has been improvement in the setting of academic targets for pupils by raising the level of challenge, the tracking of pupils' progress, the monitoring of the school's performance by the senior leadership team, subject leaders and governors and in strategies to move pupils at all academic levels onto the next level. All these have been effective and standards are now rising. Furthermore, this is providing a firm basis for the new headteacher to work on from the beginning of next term. The school has a good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The recent development of a Foundation Unit means that children from Nursery and Reception are taught together and transition from one age group to the next is smooth. This is a well-equipped room with a wealth of resources to support adult-led and child-initiated activities and opportunities to learn through play, both in and outdoors. Children enjoy the activities and engage in them enthusiastically. The adults working in the Foundation Unit work well as a team, with each leading groups of pupils competently both in formal learning situations and in the free-flow activities, where children choose what they want to do. They carefully monitor children's choices and ensure that all experience a balanced curriculum during the course of each week. Assessment is thorough. Staff build up comprehensive folders about each child's

progress across all areas of learning and know clearly how well each one is doing at any time. In this effective learning environment, children achieve well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that results of Year 6 mathematics and science tests match the improved results in English.
- Make sure that work is well targeted to pupils' needs in all lessons and that the marking of work consistently provides pupils with better guidance on how they can improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall achievement is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Pupils start school with attainment well below that typical for pupils of a similar age. They achieve well in the Foundation Unit, although they do not reach the levels nationally expected by the end of Reception. They do well in their personal, social and emotional development but writing remains a weakness. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average overall and in reading and writing, but last year they were below average in mathematics. Current attainment in Year 2 matches that expected for pupils of this age. Achievement through Key Stage 1 is good. In the 2006 national tests pupils did better in English than in mathematics and science. Standards at the end of Year 6 are improving because of well targeted intervention and are currently as nationally expected for pupils of this age. Assessment data and school tracking show that pupils make satisfactory progress through the key stage.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. During their time in school, pupils grow into sensible and thoughtful young people, who show courtesy and consideration to others. Their spiritual development is good and is seen in assemblies, many taken by clergy from the church, and in lessons where they explore how the characters of people in literature affect behaviour and actions. Good moral and social development manifests itself in the way pupils relate to each other and how they moderate their own good behaviour, knowing the difference between right and wrong. Their cultural development is good although opportunities to increase pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own are sometimes missed. Pupils contribute well to the comfortable atmosphere in which they spend their days. Trained play leaders help others to enjoy the extensive resources available at breaks. The school council organises and runs a tuck shop where pupils buy healthy snacks. Pupils say that if they are ever lonely and go to the friendship stop, someone always asks them to play. They are prepared adequately for the next stages of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality of teaching results in the good progress made by pupils. Pupils' confidence is increased by an ethos that encourages them to 'have a go' and not be afraid of making mistakes. Teachers plan varied activities, which engage and inspire the pupils and make them want to succeed. They encourage pupils to use thinking skills to reflect upon and talk about

their learning. This helps them assess their own and each other's work. Opportunities are provided to do this in small groups and independently. However, marking of work does not consistently tell pupils how to improve it. Throughout the school, teachers have created attractive classrooms, which provide a positive and stimulating environment for learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide effective support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned carefully to motivate and meet the needs of all pupils. Effective transition work ensures that skills learnt in the Foundation Stage are developed as pupils move up the school. Good cross-curricular links are being developed and this is helping pupils to transfer skills and see how different areas of learning connect. For example, Year 6 pupils used the skill of developing an argument and linked this with the rights and wrongs of a graffiti design. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to add impact and interest in lessons. This includes effective use of interactive whiteboards by teachers and pupils to support learning. A range of additional activities to extend learning enriches the curriculum. These include trips out to local places of interest, visitors who broaden pupils' understanding of other cultures and a residential trip to Yorkshire in Year 6. The good programme used to support personal development informs pupils about healthy choices and helps develop life skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff give high priority to the quality of pastoral care of pupils. They have created a school with a welcoming atmosphere where pupils feel secure and happy. Their health and safety are promoted through the curriculum, visiting speakers and after-school clubs. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that it is dealt with effectively when necessary. The school shows care for individuals through the counselling and support offered to pupils with specific personal problems such as bereavement. Specific learning needs are identified early and addressed promptly. Links with outside agencies support this process well. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well and participate fully in school activities. Academic guidance is provided through the setting of challenging targets of which pupils are aware although occasionally pupils in a class all get the same work regardless of ability.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management have set a clear direction for school improvement. Priorities are relevant to pupils' needs and founded in rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. Strategies to address weaknesses are well thought out and effective, leading to improved standards. There is a comprehensive programme of monitoring, which involves the headteacher and senior leadership team, subject leaders and governors. Through this, governors are supportive and challenging and have a clear view of what the school needs. The monitoring programme involves observing lessons, analysing assessment data to establish strengths and weaknesses in attainment and achievement, sampling pupils' work and monitoring closely pupils' progress towards achieving their targets. This results in senior leaders having an accurate view of how well the school is doing. The school has sensibly identified groups of pupils across

the full range of ability to support as well as subject areas for development. Support strategies are focussed tightly on specific areas of weakness.

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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	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	2
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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

We enjoyed visiting you recently and would like to thank you for making us welcome. We really enjoyed the opportunities we had to talk to you in lessons and at other times during the two days we spent with you. We were pleased to see and hear that you appreciate what teachers and other adults in school are doing for you. You have good attitudes to school and enjoy being there. This was clear from the good behaviour we saw throughout our time with you. The way in which you look after each other, speak kindly about other children and contribute to life in school is impressive. The adults working at St Swithun's CofE Primary care for you all well. All this helps you settle in quickly and feel safe.

The school has improved a lot over the last two years and is providing a good education. There have been a number of improvements through the hard work that the staff of the school have put in and, as a result, you all make good progress and standards are improving. This is shown in better test results at the end of Year 6 in English last year. Unfortunately, results in mathematics and science did not match these, but better standards seen in class and in your books during the inspection make the school confident of improved results this year. We have asked your teachers to make sure that the improvement seen in English is also seen in mathematics and science this year. You have an important role to play in this by carrying on working as well as you do. We have also asked your teachers to help you achieve this by telling you more clearly, when marking your work, how to improve. We have also asked them to make sure that all work is matched well to your different abilities.

You can play your part by continuing to cooperate and behave as well as you do.

We wish you all well in the future.

David Speakman (Lead inspector)