

Swell Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115652
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326241
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Lake

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	31
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Doswell
Headteacher	Karen Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lower Swell Cheltenham GL54 1LH
Telephone number	01451 830707

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Inspection number	326241

Fax number

01451 870328

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average school serving the villages of Upper Swell Lower Swell and Upper Slaughter, although many pupils also travel in from surrounding towns and villages. The school has been through considerable changes recently and has now been federated with nearby Longborough Primary school. The head and governing body are responsible for both schools. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage of education are taught in a mixed class along with pupils from Years 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion in the current Year 6 is well above average. Many more pupils than usual leave or join the school at times other than the normal age of starting. The very small numbers in each year group, plus the high turnover of pupils, means that standards vary significantly from year to year.

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 a good school. Good teaching ensures pupils achieve well. Consequently, they leave school with above average standards. The good curriculum, coupled with strengths in pastoral care, results in pupils' excellent personal development and well-being and their good achievement. The school is good at checking on what it does well and dealing with any areas of improvement identified. Parents love the family atmosphere and many wrote in support of the school. The general view is best summed up by the one who wrote, 'My children thrive in this school – which is small and secure. The children feel safe.'

The very small numbers of pupils in each year group cause significant variations in standards and achievement from year to year. The trend over recent years shows that pupils enter school with skills broadly similar to those expected at age four. Though standards are generally above average by the time pupils leave in Year 6, they are average in mathematics. There are a number of reasons for this. The information that the school has on pupils' progress is not used effectively enough in mathematics to set precise short-term targets for pupils' learning. Marking, particularly in mathematics, does not always make it clear to pupils exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior learning because the targets set for them in all subjects are not structured carefully enough to allow progress in small manageable steps.

The curriculum has some outstanding features, particularly in the way the many and varied activities support pupils' personal development and well-being. Behaviour is excellent because pupils enjoy immensely the exciting and motivating activities provided for them. They particularly enjoy the opportunities to cook their own healthy meals and the after school sports clubs. These activities contribute very well to pupils' excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and fit. The many opportunities for writing in the curriculum develop pupils' literacy skills well, but too few opportunities exist for pupils to extend and practise their mathematical skills in other subjects.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are satisfactory overall. The school looks after pupils very well and takes great care to ensure their well-being. Pupils know how to stay safe because of the excellent guidance that they receive in this area. Nevertheless, the satisfactory academic guidance that pupils receive is inconsistent. Although detailed records are kept of pupils' progress, the use of this information to plan lessons that challenge all pupils to achieve their best is inconsistent.

Good leadership and management have ensured effective systems are in place to check the school's work. These give an accurate picture of what is and is not working. The last year or so has been challenging with all the work required to develop the federation with Longborough school. Clear benefits have been identified by the headteacher and the effective governing body but it is too early to see the full impact of these. Through the federation, teachers have fewer subject responsibilities which has meant they are developing more focused roles as subject leaders. This is enabling a closer check on the quality of learning in subjects. Opportunities and systems within the new federation to allow subject leaders to monitor the quality of learning, especially in mathematics, and provide guidance to teachers on how to improve are only just beginning.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The well established routines and strong links with parents help children new to the school to feel really secure and cared for and ensure they get a good start to their education. Children achieve well from starting points that are broadly in line with those expected. The good teaching ensures that children start Year 1 with above average standards and are well prepared for learning. Teachers are skilled at ensuring a good balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children to learn through purposeful play. Staff recognise that the difficulties of the site limit opportunities for children to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities and are constantly seeking ways in which this can be improved. The strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that the welfare and needs of the children are met well. This enables all children to grow in confidence and build securely on their previous experience. The well organised and stimulating environment is used effectively to support a stimulating curriculum that provides a good degree of challenge to children. This area is led and managed well, because the expertise and skill of the adults and the good systems for checking on progress mean that all individuals are gently but effectively challenged to achieve well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that information on what pupils already know is used effectively to set precise short-term targets, particularly in mathematics, that challenge all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Monitor learning in mathematics more rigorously, ensure marking makes it clear to pupils what they need to do next to improve their work, and provide more opportunities within other subjects for pupils to use and develop their mathematical skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average when looked at over several years. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6, the trend shows standards are very high in science and above average in English. Standards in reading are very high but slightly lower in writing, although this is improving due to the higher focus on writing skills and the many opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to write in other subjects. The school has identified the lower standards and achievement in mathematics and set higher challenging but achievable targets for 2010. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not doing as well as other pupils because the learning targets set for them have not been challenging enough. This holds down overall attainment in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology are good and good quality work was observed in history and geography.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and have extremely positive attitudes to learning, as shown by their well above average attendance. Pupils' excellent behaviour ensures that school is a calm and very safe place in which to learn. The 'Healthy School' award recognises pupils' excellent understanding of healthy diets and they take part enthusiastically in the many

opportunities for physical activity in after school clubs. Pupils show excellent consideration for the views of others and all make an excellent contribution to the smooth running of the school, for example helping to look after the new children visiting prior to starting school in September. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. They organise a range of fund-raising activities to help those less well off nationally and internationally and support younger pupils through the prefect system. Through such activities, pupils develop key skills that prepare them well for their future lives and enable them to make a strong contribution to the community around them. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of cultures in other parts of the world through links with schools in other countries, such as Fiji, but the school has recognised that their rural setting means that pupils have a comparatively weaker understanding of the wide range of cultures in Britain today. The school is exploring ways of linking with a school in an inner-city area to address this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know how to motivate and stimulate pupils to learn, especially in reading. They know what they expect pupils to learn, and their clear explanations make pupils confident about tackling their work. Pupils' literacy skills are developed well through the good use of information and communication technology and opportunities to use these skills in other subjects, such as history and geography. However, too few opportunities are taken to support the development of mathematical skills in other subjects, for example when younger pupils were playing nine-pin skittles opportunities were not taken to encourage pupils to count those down or still standing. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but comments are often too general, especially in mathematics, and do not give pupils clear enough guidance on what it is they need to do next to improve their work. The close partnership between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Within the rich and stimulating curriculum, many opportunities are taken to broaden pupils' experience through visitors to the school and visits to places of interest. These visits make a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development. For example, pupils' understanding of healthy eating has been improved through their study of the gardens at Hidcote Manor and the discussions on diets in different cultures. Activities such as producing a cook book of healthy recipes from different cultures enables pupils to understand how subjects interlink and develop their literacy skills. Nevertheless, too few opportunities are taken to develop pupils' mathematical skills across the curriculum. Pupils' understanding of community cohesion is strengthened through visits to places of worship for different faiths. The needs of pupils identified as gifted and talented are provided for through the high quality links with other local schools

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school looks after the pupils well and some elements of pastoral care are outstanding, for example guidance on how to stay healthy and fit. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

The school works very closely with a wide range of agencies to support the learning of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Accurate assessments of pupils' progress are recorded in great detail but this information is not used consistently. In particular, not enough use is made of the information to set pupils clear short-term targets in mathematics that challenge them to improve their work. In the same way, the individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not have precise enough small-step targets that allow pupils to build steadily upon their prior learning. These inconsistencies hold down the progress of all pupils in mathematics and the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has recognised the need to improve targets and has already organised a training session on this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are characterised by the hard work and determination shown by the effective headteacher. Supported by the good quality governing body, she has monitored the quality of teaching and learning well, which is why the school has an accurate picture of what is working and where improvement is needed. This, together with improvements made in other areas, demonstrates that the school is well placed to improve further. Nevertheless, the good quality information on pupils' progress is not presented in a way that makes overall performance of a year group clear enough to senior managers and governors.

The views of parents and pupils are sought regularly and taken into account in the school development plan. For example, following requests from parents, after school clubs were extended to include art and pottery. Identified areas for improvement are being tackled systematically and with good support from the local authority. Subject leadership is improving as a slightly larger team is available through the federation to share the workload but this is very recent. At present, leadership and management in mathematics remains satisfactory as this is an area in which development has only just started.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	3

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Swell C of E Primary School, Cheltenham GL54 1LH

Thank you for the welcome and the help that you gave us when we visited your school. You were very polite and good to talk with. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and your keenness to tell us that you enjoy school immensely. We can see why that is. Swell is a good school. Here are just some of the things that we found out about your school:

- You achieve well in school. You reach standards that are better than most schools, especially in reading and science.
- Teaching is good. The teachers make learning fun and interesting.
- The curriculum is good and provides lots of different activities for you.
- Your personal development is outstanding. For such a small school, you do an amazing amount of fund-raising.
- The school looks after you really well and makes sure you know how to stay safe.

There are a few things we have asked the school to do to help make it even better and especially to help you attain higher standards in mathematics. Some of you told us that you occasionally find your work too easy. You can help by telling your teachers when this happens.

We have asked the school to work on some things in particular. These are:

- To make sure that in mathematics you all have clear learning targets that really challenge you, and to make sure that those of you who need extra help get small targets for learning that you can reach quickly.
- Make sure that marking, especially in mathematics, makes it clear what you need to do next to improve your work, and for school leaders to make sure that they check on your learning in mathematics more regularly, especially checking that you have more opportunities to use and develop your mathematical skills.

Again, thank you for your help.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Lake

Lead inspector