

Four Swannes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117092
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358078
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2010
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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 of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicky Pottinger
Headteacher	Gill Jones
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 11 lessons taught by eight different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. They looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 48 parents and carers were also considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How far advanced the children are in their development when they enter the Nursery class and how much progress they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- How well staff use assessment information to plan work which challenges pupils sufficiently and ensures they make at least satisfactory progress.
- Strategies the school implemented to deal with issues relating to pupils' attendance.
- The effectiveness of the leadership of the school, particularly at middle management level.
- Whether governors fulfilled the requirements in relation to community cohesion?

Information about the school

Four Swannes Primary School is slightly smaller than most primary schools. The school serves an ethnically diverse and highly mobile urban community. Some pupils join temporarily while awaiting school places closer to home in adjacent authorities. At least two thirds of the pupils change from one school year to the next. This is a very high proportion. Just over one third of pupils are White British heritage. The remainder come from around 20 different ethnic heritages. The most numerous groups are from Turkey, Poland and Lithuania. A very small number of pupils are of Gypsy/Roma or Irish Traveller heritage. One third of pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and over 20 languages are represented in the school. Younger children mostly enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery Year. There is, however, a steady inflow of pupils to other year groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well-above average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning or speech and language difficulties. An above average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Staff recruitment continues to be a challenge for the school. The school has been receiving additional support from its local authority since September 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school, which works hard to meet the needs of the area it serves. Despite high levels of mobility, this is a very cohesive community. New pupils are integrated quickly and effectively. The school strongly promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Staff successfully ensure pupils' safety and well-being and provide good pastoral support for those who have special educational needs or disabilities. Pupils feel very safe and have great confidence in adults. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy taking exercise. Pupils' contribution to the school is particularly good.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start and achieve well, often from low starting points, across most areas of learning. Typically, however, many of these pupils leave the school before the end of Year 2. Pupils' progress and achievement in Years 1 to 6 are satisfactory. The rapid turnover of pupils, and the high proportion with special educational needs, results in patterns of progress and attainment that are very complex and not easily compared to patterns in schools nationally. Nonetheless, effective external support has led to significant improvements in progress in the last school year, with many pupils now making good progress. While progress in the lessons seen was satisfactory overall, many of the current Year 6 have made good progress. This has been the case particularly in the last year, and Year 6 pupils are working at broadly average standards. This is an improvement from previous years, when attainment has been consistently low. The few pupils who have been in the school for their full primary education make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress. Those who join the school later make broadly satisfactory progress. Currently, progress and standards are more variable in mathematics than in reading and writing because much of the support given to the school in the last year has focused on key literacy skills, with mathematics having less priority.

A more stable teaching team, supported by a well-established tracking system and a significantly strengthened leadership team, is ensuring greater consistency of good progress across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those of Irish Traveller or Gypsy/Roma heritage, make at least satisfactory progress because of the effective support given by teaching assistants. Pupils' work is accurately assessed and assessment information satisfactorily used to match work to individual needs in most lessons. However, teachers' marking does not always give pupils enough guidance as to how they can improve their work. Individual target setting is not used with sufficient consistency across the school to have a significant impact on progress. Pupils have some opportunities to evaluate their own work, but this is not planned for systematically enough.

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While attendance has improved steadily over three years, it remains low. Monitoring by senior staff, and systems to promote better attendance, are not yet sufficiently rigorous. In other respects, school leaders know the school well and self-evaluation is accurate. The work of the governing body is satisfactory. The school's inherent strength as a community, improved teaching and progress and rising standards, an increasingly effective senior leadership team, together with mostly good procedures for monitoring the school's work, indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that there is a consistently high level of challenge in lessons so that pupils make more rapid progress and attain higher standards in mathematics.
- Increase attendance further through:
 - more rigorous and timely monitoring of patterns of absence so as to identify and address attendance issues much more quickly
- Improve assessment procedures to ensure:
 - greater consistency in the use of individual targets for learning
 - more frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in evaluating the quality of their own work
 - more rigorous marking of pupils' work to ensure that they have a clear idea of how they can move their learning on.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Better teaching and higher staff expectations are supporting more rapid gains in learning. While satisfactory overall, pupils' learning varies between lessons. In a successful science lesson in Year 1, pupils were testing the reflectivity of materials, to ensure that Father Christmas would stay safe on his journey. The lesson established really good links between science and English and pupils were fully engaged by the teacher's energy and enthusiasm. As a result, learning was good. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were generating ideas for a poem, using evocative verbal images. They improved their writing through effective evaluation of the quality of their work using model phrases which guided them on what to look for. Pupils sustained attention for an extended period, drawing on their own imaginative response to the poem 'A Boy's Head'. On occasions, introductions to lessons are quite lengthy and pupils' interest wanes.

Pupils make increasingly good progress in reading and writing and standards of their work in these areas are in line with national averages. In mathematics, progress is not as consistent, though satisfactory overall, and standards are a little below average.

Pupils, although occasionally a little quiet in lessons, are willing to learn and respond well to challenges. While most work well in pairs or small groups, some are happy to get on independently. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those in the early stages of learning English make at least satisfactory progress, because staff match work closely to

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their needs. High levels of staffing ensure that additional support is available in most lessons.

Pupils' personal development is good. The school has been keen to develop the 'pupil voice'. Pupils were adamant about the style of the current school uniform, because they wanted to 'belong' and to look smart. House teams meet regularly, share ideas and organise fund-raising activities. Older pupils willingly undertake community jobs, such as play leaders. Spiritual, social and moral development is good and there are many opportunities for pupils to engage with diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Pupils have good interpersonal skills and clearly-articulated ambitions for the future, so that, with a positive work ethic and steadily improving basic skills, they are satisfactorily prepared for future study and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils' learning and progress have improved, as the benefits of more consistent teaching and the intensive support programme come through. In several lessons observed, teaching was good. In the best lessons, expectations are high, effective assessment ensures that activities are well matched to pupils' needs and relationships are very good, leading to effective learning. In general, higher expectations, sharper evaluation of progress data and greater accountability of staff are all contributing to better progress. Where progress is less secure, it often reflects

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some lack of challenge or insufficiently high expectations of pupils' written work. This is because individual targets, though reasonably challenging, are not used consistently enough to drive pupils' learning. In particular, teachers' marking is sometimes superficial, providing limited guidance for pupils on the next steps in learning. There is some use of activities to encourage pupils to evaluate their own work. However, there is no commonality of approach, so that opportunities are occasionally missed to develop and strengthen good practice across the school.

The curriculum satisfactorily supports the development of pupils' English skills and this has been a key school improvement focus. Pupils' mathematical skills have had a lower profile recently, because of the primary focus on literacy skills in the last school year. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is carefully planned. The development of a skills-based curriculum is beginning to provide more interesting opportunities for learning. Pupils make some use of their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, although recorded work in science is limited at present. External partnership activities contribute satisfactorily to extending pupils' learning. These include occasional events to support gifted and talented pupils. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment opportunities are satisfactory.

Staff care for pupils well and are very responsive to their needs. Transition arrangements are good. The school works closely with support agencies, particularly for pupils with specific needs. There is good practice in supporting the health, social, behavioural and transition needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Teaching and learning support staff with bilingual skills are used effectively to promote pupils' ability to access the curriculum through English. Although attendance is slowly improving, the monitoring of attendance trends by senior staff is not always rigorous enough.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher knows the pupils and the local community well and has successfully promoted those aspects of provision, particularly around care and safeguarding, which ensure pupils' good personal development. The school is proactive in trying to engage parents. The headteacher is also increasingly focused on raising attainment and achievement. Challenging targets have been set for 2011. There is a rigorous approach to tracking pupils' progress. The 'core' middle-management group is contributing to more rigorous monitoring and greater staff accountability. The appointment of an experienced inclusion manager and a deputy headteacher has strengthened the team. As a result of these changes, coupled with support from the local authority, improvements in pupils'

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learning are evident. School self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. However, the school development plan is rather unwieldy, with too many priorities; the school is now addressing this.

Historically, governors have not actively challenged school leaders, particularly in relation to achievement or attendance. The governing body is in transition. The recently-elected Chair is committed to more direct involvement in monitoring the work of the school. She has a clear view of the main issues and has already identified governors' key training needs to strengthen their ability to hold the school to account. Statutory responsibilities are met. By visiting and carrying out checks, governors ensure that there is good practice in safeguarding arrangements. For instance, the curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Discrimination is tackled rigorously and the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The inconsistencies in teaching and learning are being tackled. The school is internally diverse, but very cohesive. Governors ensure that community cohesion is satisfactorily promoted and that there are opportunities to learn about other faiths and communities through the curriculum and through links with other schools. However, the global dimension is not so strong.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Nursery are less secure in communication, language and literacy than in other elements of learning. Good induction arrangements, including home visits for Nursery entrants, ensure that children feel safe. In the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, the high ratio of adults means that children are well cared for and establish good relationships. Children are polite, play safely, behave well and ask for help when they need it. This supports their social development well. Children begin to develop independence in their learning. Most children who enter Nursery remain for the

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Reception year. Overall, they make good progress in their learning, particularly in speaking and listening, communication and fine motor skills, so that, by the time they enter Year 1 their skills and knowledge are close to the level expected. However, outcomes in social development and knowledge of the world are not as high as the others.

Children's skills in reading and writing are well supported by a systematic programme for teaching sounds and letters. Very focused teaching ensures that children successfully extend and develop their speaking and listening skills. Children who enter with little knowledge of English receive dedicated support to ensure that can access the English language and, in time, the rest of the curriculum. Sessions of direct teaching are well-planned and provide good challenge, successfully meeting children's needs across the ability range. There is a good balance of activities chosen by children and those led by adults, which ensures that learning sustains a good pace. Children have good opportunities to make choices, both indoor and out. The unit, with its alcoves and well-planned areas, offers a stimulating and interesting learning environment. Resources meet children's learning needs well.

Most areas of learning are planned for appropriately. Regular assessments provide good information on children's progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a good oversight of the strengths of the provision. The analysis of entry data is relatively new but is now enabling staff to track progress more closely. They are increasingly well-placed to demonstrate the extent of the progress children make.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with the school and the provision it makes for their children. One said, 'My daughter comes home every day full of beans. We have found all the teachers extremely helpful, friendly and approachable.' A few parents and carers had concerns, relating mainly to the progress their children are making, the school's response to unacceptable behaviour or to the leadership. The school recognises that the rate of pupils' progress has not, in the past, been consistent enough and this is reflected also in the inspection findings. However, this is improving steadily, so that, in the last school year, some groups of pupils made good progress. The school has clear procedures, which have regard to local authority requirements, for the management of pupils' behaviour. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was consistently good. Inspection findings indicate that the current leadership team shows considerable commitment to pupils' well-being and academic progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Four Swannes Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	52	20	42	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	17	35	26	54	5	10	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	33	27	56	4	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	35	23	48	7	15	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	18	38	25	52	4	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	29	29	60	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	27	29	60	6	13	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	11	23	28	58	4	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	27	28	58	6	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	29	26	54	5	10	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	21	30	63	4	8	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	13	27	26	54	7	15	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	38	23	48	5	10	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 November 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for making us welcome during our visit. We were glad to have the opportunity to talk to you and hear your views. We found that, while yours is a satisfactory school, it is improving steadily and securely. These are our main findings.

You work hard, mostly enjoy lessons and behave well.

You make satisfactory progress overall. Indeed, some of you made good progress last year. Attainment is improving by the end of Year 6.

You undertake many jobs in school. Although you make a good contribution to the school, links with the local community are more limited.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good lessons.

Most of you feel very safe and have a good awareness of the importance of eating healthily and staying fit.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has made real progress in improving the teaching of reading and writing; extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.

School leaders set a very clear direction for the school, know how well it is doing and ensure that you are well looked after.

We are asking the school to make some changes to help you do even better. It should:

- enable you to make even more rapid progress and reach higher standards in reading, writing and, particularly, mathematics
- put in better systems, including rewards for good attendance, to ensure that you all attend school as often as possible
- make sure that teachers help you to understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work through their marking of your work, the targets they set and the opportunities they give you to judge the quality of your own work.

You can help by attending well, continuing to work hard and do your best. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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