

The Sweyne Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131110
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	341094
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	L Walker
Headteacher	A Hodgkinson
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2006
School address	Sir Walter Raleigh Drive Rayleigh Essex SS6 9BZ
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons, observed 44 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, departmental reviews, minutes of governing body meetings and monitoring data in relation to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Inspectors also took account of the 333 parent questionnaires, 107 staff questionnaires and 152 pupil questionnaires received.

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

- the progress pupils make in lessons and the school's evidence to support its evaluation that the present pupils are making good progress
- whether improvements the school has made since the last inspection have had a positive impact on outcomes
- evidence from the school's monitoring and evaluation systems to see if it is rigorous enough to bring about improvements and ensure consistency of practice across all groups of pupils.

Information about the school

The Sweyne Park School is a comprehensive school which is above average in size. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with only a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is average. The school has a resource base for hearing impaired pupils. The school holds a number of awards, including the Leading Parent Partnership Award, Investors in People Gold Award, Artsmark Gold, and International School Award, and it has enhanced Healthy Schools accreditation. The school has specialist status in science and is a Training School.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where extremely strong leadership ensures that very well-thought-out strategies for improvement have a positive impact on provision and, in turn, on outcomes for pupils. The school engenders a very strong ethos of respect and care for others. The excellent curriculum and the outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that the needs of all pupils are very well met. Improvements in much of the teaching and the quality of the personalised curriculum are engaging pupils very effectively so that behaviour, attitudes to learning, and sometimes progress, are outstanding. As a result, attainment has been on an upward trend for the past three years and is consistently above average for pupils gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE and five A* to C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE. Given their attainment on entry to the school this represents good progress. The school recognised that results in English dipped below average in 2009 but swiftly identified and addressed the cause. As a result, secure tracking data indicate that pupils are working currently at above average levels. Pupils' attendance is well above the national average, and their consistently thoughtful behaviour makes a very strong contribution to their good learning in lessons.

The school has good capacity, not only to sustain its current levels of performance, but also to improve even further because it has a good track record of improvements that school leaders at all levels have brought about. These include addressing those areas identified as having caused the dip in English results in 2009, and meeting and exceeding the challenging targets the school set itself. All staff understand fully what the school is striving to achieve and are committed to these goals. Self-evaluation is outstanding at whole-school level and monitoring and evaluation at departmental levels are increasingly good.

Despite the significant improvements that have been made, inconsistency in teaching still remains. Teachers do not always challenge pupils to reach the highest possible levels, as they do not always use their continuous assessment during lessons to adjust what they expect of pupils. This has restricted the progress being made by pupils overall to good rather than outstanding. The school has accurately identified this and has set it as a priority in its improvement plan. Where teaching does stretch pupils fully, attainment is significantly above average as in the case of some higher attaining pupils and some who receive additional support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all lessons are at least good and many outstanding, by making sure that assessment data gathered during lessons is used to re-shape tasks to enable all pupils to make as much progress as possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment. By the time they leave, most have attainment which is above the national average and a small minority have attainment which is well above average. In 2009, English suffered a dip in results due, in the main, to a period of significant changes in staffing. However, senior leaders were quick to deal with the situation and, consequently, improve the learning and progress of pupils. The present Year 11 pupils are on track to achieve beyond the school's challenging targets for five A* to C grades and so achieve well above national averages. The specialist science status has made a significant contribution to the increase in the number of pupils gaining A* to A grade passes at GCSE.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their ability to apply themselves in lessons are excellent. This is reflected in the good, and in a few cases outstanding, progress made in lessons. The progress of individual pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, is in line with the overall rates of progress. Pupils in the hearing impaired unit make outstanding progress because of the excellent intervention of support teachers.

Pupils demonstrate many very positive attitudes. They show an excellent understanding of how to be safe. Bullying incidents are very rare and pupils are confident that there is always a member of staff to talk to should the need arise. Behaviour is exemplary in all lessons and around the school, and pupils are enthusiastic in describing the excellent relationships, based on respect and care for others, which exist across the whole school. A range of activities, introduced by the physical education department, have had a positive impact on pupils' extremely successful adoption of healthy lifestyles. Pupils talk positively about how the improved catering facilities help them to eat healthy food.

Pupils are exceptionally effective members of the school and wider community. For example, they take a prominent role in working with teachers to identify areas for improvement in facilities for relaxation at break and lunchtimes, and collaborate with the local authority on looking at ways to make public parks more attractive to young people. The specialist science status has contributed to pupils working with feeder schools. Pupils have an excellent awareness of the value of diverse cultures and of moral, spiritual and social issues as a result of their involvement in a range of activities. These include international links with young people in Tanzania, which have helped to develop sustainable activities in their schools.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Very good relationships between pupils and teachers create a positive environment for learning which results in pupils making good and sometimes outstanding progress over time. In the best lessons teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects and transmit their enthusiasm to pupils. They make effective use of interactive white boards and other resources which contribute to the high quality learning seen. For example, pupils were highly motivated in an English lesson where they were using pictures to stimulate their thinking about possible language choice and tone in responding to the teacher’s questioning. Pupils have an understanding of their targets and many teachers use assessment information to plan lessons and to monitor pupils’ progress. However, assessment data gathered during lessons is not always used effectively to re-shape tasks and so enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

Since the last inspection, the school has continued to develop the curriculum to ensure it meets the differing needs and aspirations of all groups of pupils. They comment very positively about the range of opportunities available to them, both within the curriculum and as extra-curricular activities. There is an excellent choice of options available including the innovative development of the ‘skills base’ and hairdressing salon, which is built into the curriculum in Years 8 and 9. There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and to share information. The specialist science status has been used effectively, for example in developing health and safety procedures across the curriculum.

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

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Pupils and parents are enthusiastic in their praise of the outstanding care and support provided by the school. Pupils are known as individuals, and a very strong pastoral structure supports intervention, where necessary, through the productive links with outside agencies. Evidence was seen of the excellent provision made for students who have diverse and challenging needs. For example, pupils with hearing impairment benefit for the specialist facilities and expertise available to them. Very-well-planned transition arrangements ensure that pupils who join Year 7 settle quickly into their new school. Rigorous systems are in place to promote attendance and have resulted in high attendance figures and have also reduced the number of persistent absentees.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The outstanding drive and enthusiasm of the inspirational headteacher, supported by an excellent senior leadership team, have focused the school on raising standards through creating a culture of high expectations that staff and pupils support. The success of this is reflected in the willingness of all staff to improve their practice. The school was quick to identify the reasons for the dip in English results in 2009 and successfully addressed areas of concern. There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities throughout the school and heads of department are held increasingly accountable for the performance of their subjects. Monitoring and evaluation have identified appropriate areas for improvement in teaching, and suitable training has been put in place to increase the number of outstanding lessons. The school's science specialism is well managed and has raised the profile of science and improved curriculum opportunities and attainment.

Outstanding engagement of parents and carers is seen in the attendance at school functions, and in the close consultation with them on how they can support their children's learning at home and on major issues regarding changes to the school. A range of effective partnerships enhance the school's provision and contribute to the achievement and well-being of pupils.

The school places the promotion of equal opportunities at the heart of its work and has good procedures in place to ensure all groups of pupils make good progress. The success of this is seen in the percentage of pupils gaining five A* to G grades at GCSE, which is significantly above average, and in the very small number of pupils who leave school without continuing to further education, employment or training.

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

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The school has embedded strong systems to ensure an outstanding approach to community cohesion. These build on established links with communities both locally and world-wide, enabling pupils to experience communities, which are different from their own. Governors know the school well and provide good support. They are increasingly challenging the school to explain its actions. Outstanding safeguarding procedures involve clear record keeping, which is constantly reviewed and closely monitored.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of those who responded to the questionnaire were highly positive about the education their children receive at The Sweyne Park School. Their views support the judgements made by inspectors, particularly in relation to how well the school keeps pupils safe and how effectively the school is led and managed. However, a very small minority believe that the progress of their children is not good enough. The inspection identified ensuring all pupils do as well as they can as an area for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Sweyne Park 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 333 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1269 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	134	40	183	55	13	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	167	50	161	48	4	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	143	43	166	50	20	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	141	42	174	52	14	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	138	41	181	54	10	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	103	31	200	60	23	7	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	99	30	206	62	23	7	1	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)	142	42	156	47	12	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	131	39	187	56	9	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	123	37	180	54	21	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	96	29	196	59	18	5	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	181	54	146	44	1	0	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	192	58	130	39	5	2	3	1

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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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.



14 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Sweyne Park School, Rayleigh, SS6 9BZ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you, and were extremely impressed with the maturity with which you answered our questions. Yours is an outstanding school.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

- The standards you reach at the end of Year 11 are above average and your personal development is outstanding. This means that you are very well prepared to move on to further education or training.
- You contribute exceptionally well to the school and the wider community.
- The teaching is good and you are given opportunities to be involved in interesting activities.
- Staff take care to ensure you are looked after and supported extremely well and, as a result, you feel extremely safe.
- Your headteacher and staff are enthusiastic and totally committed to improving the work of the school so that you achieve as well as you can.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- to make sure that teachers use assessment data, collected during the lessons, to re-shape activities, so that your learning enables you to achieve as well as you can.

Yours sincerely

Roger Whittaker
Lead inspector

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