

Sytchampton Endowed First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116916
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	326488
Inspection date	13 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Callow

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	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	113
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	John Sylvester
Headteacher	Cynthia Evans
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sytchampton Stourport-on-Severn DY13 9SX
Telephone number	01905 620418
Fax number	01905 621309

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision and investigated the following issues:

- The impact of initiatives to accelerate pupils' progress in literacy throughout the school.
- The effectiveness of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting pupils' progress across the curriculum.
- The extent to which a broad and rich curriculum is enabling pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and support staff, the chair of governors, parents and pupils; lesson observations; scrutiny of work; analysis of assessment data; a review of the school's development plan; and monitoring and evaluation records.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Pupils attending this village school come from a very wide area and from a range of backgrounds. The vast majority are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average overall, but varies considerably between year groups. The school holds a considerable number of awards, including the Green Eco School flag, Sports Activemark, Healthy School status, Artsmark Gold and several Leading Aspect Awards for innovative practice in different aspects of the curriculum. Breakfast and after-school clubs are run on the premises by an outside provider.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sytchampton was judged to be outstanding at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case. However, the school has not stood still over the last three years and has got even better because of the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and the level of challenge it sets for all of its pupils. Fundamental to its continuing improvement is also the school's willingness to embrace change, to take on board new initiatives and to balance the excellent personal development and well-being of pupils with outstanding academic achievement. These factors, combined with the effective leadership of an able, cohesive and enthusiastic staff team, provide the school with the outstanding capacity to improve further. The headteacher, with good support from the deputy headteacher, ensures that expectations are always extremely high and that everyone is clear of the school's priorities. The overwhelming majority of parents praise the school and the following comment is typical of many received: 'We feel very privileged to have our child at this fantastic school.'

The majority of children enter the EYFS with levels of skill that are similar to those expected for four-year olds, but they are not as high as at the time of the last inspection. An increasing number of pupils show weaknesses in communication, language and literacy when they start school. Children settle quickly because of a good induction programme, make excellent progress and start Year 1 with standards that are above average. This rate of progress continues for pupils of all abilities as they move up through the school, so that for example in 2008 at the end of Year 2 and in Year 4, when pupils leave, standards were very high and well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards do vary a little, according to the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the present Year 4, for example, where the proportion is approximately one half, whilst standards are still above average, they are not as high as in other years. Despite this, the pupils' achievement is still outstanding because, as with all year groups, teaching is of a very high standard and pupils' progress is tracked rigorously. Teachers provide pupils with interesting activities well matched to their abilities, with the result that they are eager to learn.

In order to meet the needs of all pupils, and particularly those who start school with weaknesses in communication, language and literacy, the school has embarked on a number of new whole-school strategies, including 'Big Talk', 'Big Write' and a structured approach to the teaching of phonics. The aim is to accelerate learning and ensure that all pupils meet with early success in reading, writing and spelling. Although there is some evidence of increased pupils' progress, these strategies are relatively new and so their full impact has still to be felt. A high degree of engagement from the children is already noticeable and the opportunity for pupils in Years 1 to 4 to work with others of the same ability means that the work is particularly well matched to their needs. Pupils' progress in their written work is greatly enhanced by very thorough marking. Teachers give very helpful comments in the form of targets for improvement and provide pupils with time to act on these in class. Discussion with pupils demonstrates a high level of awareness and understanding of these targets, which is undoubtedly contributing to their excellent progress. The school's development plan identifies extending the use of ICT throughout the curriculum as an area for improvement. Evidence from work in books and around the school demonstrates that the school is already very successful in this. In subjects as varied as history, art and physical education, good use is being made of ICT for both teaching and learning, as well as in the core areas of English, mathematics and science. The subject is well led and teachers are confident as a result of a range of good training opportunities. Pupils'

thorough grasp of the basic skills such as word processing, navigating websites and storing data means that they can apply their knowledge and understanding to enhance their learning across the curriculum. For example, last year older pupils themselves produced a CD of pupils' artwork for sale as part of the Young Business Enterprise project. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively by teachers and pupils and even the youngest children use them confidently and enjoy learning from the visual images, such as the animals, and the names of those animals in Noah's Ark.

The breadth and richness of the curriculum is impressive. It is evident that it never stands still, responding to the pupils' interests, what is topical and particularly issues that are affecting them now and will do so later in life. Pupils say how much they enjoy school and especially because of the wide range of practical activities, including sport and music. Excellent use is made of the school grounds, with opportunities for pupils to grow and sell their own vegetables in the garden as well as to study wildlife in the conservation area. Visits and visitors are well planned to bring themes to life and to engage pupils in their learning. For example, a strong link with a community in The Gambia began with a visitor to the school, and resulted with pupils raising funds for the water supply as well as learning about a different culture. Environmental issues are very much to the fore and pupils talk confidently about recycling and what we should be doing to stop bee colonies from dying out.

Sytchampton School is a happy community, with strong links with parents as well as other local schools and organisations, including the before- and after-school provision. Regular attendance is strongly promoted and has improved since last year. The care and concern shown to individual pupils contributes greatly to their excellent behaviour, politeness and friendliness. They have a thorough understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and answers to questions in the Year 1 class showed how aware they are of keeping themselves safe. Pupils' contribution to the wider community is worthy of special praise and they show a great deal of initiative and independence, promoted by the work of the School Council and Eco Committee in raising funds for themselves and for charity. Preparation for their future lives is excellent because of pupils' competence in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT but also because of how they learn to work together in teams and to take responsibility. The school's involvement in the Young Business Enterprise project in 2008 was a remarkable success which not only helped to develop pupils' skills but brought parents and members of the local community together.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children are happy and confident in the EYFS because there is strong leadership and they are extremely well cared for. They have acquired a great deal of independence and are able to find resources, settle down to activities and tidy up without the help of an adult. High quality teaching makes excellent use of a bright, stimulating and well-organised classroom and the outdoor environment. This has improved greatly since the last inspection and it is used continually for learning across the curriculum. For example, children were observed learning about mathematical language through a fun, practical activity with bean-bags outside. Good attention is being given to children's skills in communication, language and literacy and particularly to those who come into school with weaknesses. Both adult-led and child-initiated activities help children of all abilities to make excellent progress in this, as in all areas of early learning. The focus on sounds and letters is already making a strong contribution.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the new approaches to accelerate progress in literacy to ensure that high standards are maintained.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

14 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Sytchampton Endowed First School, Stourport-on-Severn DY13 9SX

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed with the many good things that are going on, and have judged your school to be outstanding.

You told us about all the practical things that you enjoy doing like gardening, sport and music. We hope that those of you who take part in 'The Johnny Cash Roadshow' enjoy your evening of singing. This is a great honour for you and is typical of the many opportunities that you are given to take part in events in the local community. Your school also enables each one of you to do your best and reach the highest standards you are capable of. This is because all of the teaching is so good and your headteacher and other leaders of the school are always trying to find exciting things which you will enjoy learning about. You often have a chance to use computers in your work and it was good to see how confidently you use them in different subjects.

Although the great majority of you do really well in reading and writing, your teachers want to make sure that each one of makes as much progress as you can. They are trying some new ways of helping you and we think that it is a really good idea. We have said that it is important to find the ones that work the best and use them across the school.

You are fortunate to be in a school where you are so well cared for. This is helping you to grow up to be kind, helpful and responsible. We hope that you will always be like this and try your hardest in your work all of the time. In this way Sytchampton School will continue to ensure that everyone who leaves will be really well prepared for the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Callow

Lead inspector