

Northbourne Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123221
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380622
Inspection dates	29 February–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Anthony Byrne

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Driscoll
Headteacher	Paul Shaughnessy
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anthony Byrne	Additional inspector
Graeme Burgess	Additional inspector
Catherine Robinson-Slater	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 26 lessons, observed 12 different teachers and held meetings with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They evaluated pupils' attainment over three years and considered progress in lessons, in pupils' books, as recorded by the school's assessment system and as perceived by pupils and parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as considering 112 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers. The school's self-evaluation documentation, including records of lesson observations and the improvement plan were taken into account. Risk assessments were sampled and other documentation relating to safeguarding pupils was checked.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The school meets the government's current floor standard for academic performance. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs is above average; the most common needs relate to difficulties with communication, especially literacy. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased since the previous inspection; very few of those who have English as an additional language are at an early stage of learning English. The headteacher was appointed full time in September 2010 after a period of acting headship for two days a week. The school offers a breakfast club, along with other activities after school. It holds an International Schools Award for links with other schools in this country and abroad. An onsite pre-school, not run by the governing body, includes children of nursery age. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements. Children from there and other nurseries begin Northbourne in one of two Reception classes.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school, well led and fuelled by a passion to ‘nurture excellence’. Parents’ and carers’ views clearly recognise the school’s good qualities. It is not yet outstanding because progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in English and because attendance is average at present.
- Pupils make good progress from well-below-average starting points and attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Pupils make the best progress in English, where attainment is a little higher than in mathematics. Boys have been attaining higher standards than girls, but girls are now catching up.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, as at the time of the previous inspection. It has improved to be consistently good in both Key Stages 1 and 2. Clear guidance about learning is given in all lessons, so pupils learn independently, with support and challenge well distributed. Pupils know clearly what their next steps should be to improve work. Small group work for those who need extra support produces rapid gains in literacy. The push to improve the use of key skills across the curriculum has gone further and faster than it has in numeracy.
- Behaviour is good; pupils mix together harmoniously, reflecting the school’s values. Pupils’ feelings of safety in school are strongly endorsed by parents and carers. Lively events which celebrate pupils’ learning are greatly enjoyed and the school takes every opportunity to engage parents and carers in supporting learning. Attendance, although improving, remains average principally because there have been too many authorised absences for term-time holidays, especially at the start of the school year.
- The headteacher has raised expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. Teaching and pupils’ progress have been improved by a very effective combination of accurate monitoring and good-quality professional development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that by the end of the next academic year progress in mathematics is as rapid as in English by:
 - using assessment to finely tune tasks to challenge pupils working at different levels
 - arranging better support for pupils at risk of falling behind
 - building pupils' engagement and confidence by celebrating achievement in numeracy in a similar way to pupils' written work in topics.
- Improve attendance to above average by:
 - reducing the number of holidays taken in term time
 - working with parents and carers to stress the importance of attendance, especially at the start of the school year.

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Main report

Achievement of pupils

Generally, children start school well below age-related expectations, especially in literacy and numeracy skills. They make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as seen for example, when they confidently sounded out letters to read a map of landmarks on a 'treasure trail' outside and when writing other people's names using good knowledge of letters and sounds. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils receive daily teaching of phonics which helps them to recognise and pronounce the sounds letters and groups of letters represent. Good progress was observed in these sessions. Although data show that previously progress slowed down in Key Stage 1, improved teaching is now securing better achievement. Phonics sessions and a home/school reading scheme, continued from the Early Years Foundation Stage, help pupils to reach average standards in reading by the end of Year 2. Writing and numeracy skills improve and gaps narrow but are below average. New methods are improving confidence in writing. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, were excited to turn the classroom into a rainforest and could read and explain words about the tree canopy and write labels for pictures of animals, but their books still show letter formation that is underdeveloped.

Progress is good in lessons in Key Stage 2 because pupils are quickly engaged in independent work. Additional interventions with individuals or small groups boost reading progress when the school re-checks skills. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils read well, reaching average standards. For example, pupils at different levels of attainment read fluently from their writing about bombing raids in the Second World War and none stumbled over words and phrases, such as 'toxic gas' and 'obliterated'. Girls have narrowed the gap between themselves and boys, and in 2011 surpassed the boys in English but not in mathematics. They work equally hard in lessons, although boys are readier to volunteer answers, especially in mathematics. Both genders and the majority of other groups, including pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs, others known to be entitled to free school meals and pupils who have English as an additional language, progress better than similar groups nationally.

The school takes many opportunities to celebrate pupils' work through creative and often theatrical events shared with their families. This improves confidence and enjoyment of learning and significantly contributes to achievement. Displays also celebrate pupils' work in literacy, but this is not done to the same extent in numeracy. Parents and carers are very positive about their children's progress and inspection evidence confirmed their view.

Quality of teaching

Teaching has improved in Key Stage 1 and is typically good, and sometimes outstanding, throughout the school. Feedback to pupils, a weakness at the time of

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the previous inspection, has been improved and is now a strength. Pupils are clear what their current levels are and what they need to do to reach stretching targets. Notes of children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and even in breakfast club, inform checks on their progress. Small group teaching for those who need extra help secures improvement rapidly, including for pupils with special educational needs. When this happens, a good feature is that their work is closely related to what their class is doing so that they do not lose touch with the curriculum.

Literacy is very well taught in the topics and other subjects which form the curriculum. Subjects are generally well resourced and capture pupils' interest, developing their understanding of the world at large and their thoughts and feelings about it. Hence, teaching promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. In almost all lessons teachers set out what is to be learned briskly and clearly, so that pupils move rapidly to independent learning. Teachers and assistants distribute attention and support very well, including making sure more-able pupils are challenged. Communication between staff is very good so assessment and planning support learning. However, in mathematics, assessment is not supporting progress as well as in English. In some of the mathematics books seen, while marking was regular and helpful, pupils at wide ranging levels of ability were tackling similar work, which effectively challenged only pupils in the middle of that range. Parents and carers expressed positive views about teaching and some commented on how it has improved. The inspection evidence confirmed that their views are justified.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour over time is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and learn about avoiding risks outside. Pupils behave well both in the classroom and around the school. They work very well with each other, including in play in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Outside, incidents are rare and quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils say that the only type of bullying they are aware of is occasional name calling, which staff deal with promptly. Parents and carers have confidence in the school's management of behaviour and this is justified. A parent, who had some concerns about behaviour, also acknowledged that incidents are dealt with 'promptly and efficiently'. There have been no exclusions for the past three years. Some pupils who move to the school having had difficulties elsewhere settle well in the harmonious atmosphere. One such pupil said that staff help overcome frustrations and, 'Here, they listen to me.'

Parental engagement in their children's safety was supported by a recent workshop with a local expert on the use of the internet and social networking sites.

Pupils gain a good understanding of different cultures through links with other schools abroad. The increasing proportion of pupils from Eastern European and Black African backgrounds are well integrated. Breakfast Club is well run with

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variety of activities through interchanging hall and library facilities and good communications with home. Older pupils take on responsibilities, including for their learning at home, and are well prepared for their next stage of education. Attendance has improved, but low attendance by a few pupils and a number of authorised holidays, especially at the start of the school year, impede further progress.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, as well as aspects of their social and moral development, are promoted very well by participation in special events throughout the year. Being inspected was not allowed to interfere with dressing up for Book Day. At the same time, Years 5 and 6 hosted an event for families to display project work on the Second World War, dress as evacuees and sing songs from the era. Donations were collected to support the British Legion.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's demands on staff are welcomed because he leads by example, supports and gives constructive feedback on their efforts. The governing body takes a stronger role than in the past in scrutinising information on pupil progress and staff performance, checking that both elements are on a track to reach development targets. Accurate monitoring and constructive feedback on teaching and learning maintain high quality in the Early Years Foundation Stage and have improved teaching in the rest of the school, particularly in Key Stage 1 and in English. Staff development is good. Research, monitoring and feedback and staff development meetings are generating fresh ideas in teaching mathematics, for example in encouraging mathematical talk and supporting girls' confidence when uncertain of the correct answer.

The whole-hearted commitment of leaders and all staff and the governing body to their vision of 'nurturing excellence' by instilling high aspirations in every pupil means equal opportunity and tackling discrimination are high priorities. All groups and individuals are monitored for well-being as well as academic progress. Pupils who have not thrived elsewhere have been very well integrated, as confirmed by parental comments. The school fully meets safeguarding requirements. The curriculum and events involving families raise pupils' awareness of spiritual and moral issues and their social confidence, complementing assemblies and links with the church. Cultural awareness is particularly well supported through a strong tradition of music. The school has good partnerships with schools and other organisations, locally and beyond. Many parents and carers commented on the accessibility of staff and good communications and opportunities for engagement in their child's education, 'really making you feel part of something special'.

The inspection confirmed the view expressed by several parents that the school has become even better. Since the previous inspection the school has demonstrated strong capacity to improve further. Outstanding progress has been maintained in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and English and mathematics are improving throughout Years 1 to 6. Attendance is average, but has shown a trend

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of improvement over the last three years and is improving further this year. In order to continue this trend, the governing body has recently decided to limit the periods when holiday leave will be granted. The headteacher also personally contacts parents or carers on the first day of absence of some pupils. The impact of intervention support for pupils with special educational needs is now closely monitored to ensure its impact on improvement. Assessment now makes very clear to pupils what they need to do to improve.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Northbourne Church of England Primary School, Didcot,
OX11 8LJ**

Northbourne is a good school. We agree with you and with your parents and carers that you are kept safe and are helped to make good progress in mathematics and particularly good progress in English.

Thank you for showing us that you really enjoy your work in class in all subjects. Your school has done a lot to help you improve your reading and writing in interesting ways. We saw Years 1 and 2 exploring a rainforest in their classrooms and time travelled to wartime hardships with Years 5 and 6. Often your work builds up to an event you can share with your families, such as Book Day for younger pupils and Years 5 and 6 recreating VE Day, both of which we enjoyed seeing. Teaching is almost always good or better from Reception upwards. Your behaviour is good. You are always willing to work independently and you know you will get help if you are stuck. This school sets no limits on how far you can go and gives you confidence you can get there. However, attendance by a few of you is not as regular as it should be.

Staff are keen to make the school even better and you can help by coming to school every day and keeping up your very good efforts in class. We have asked the headteacher and governing body to take these actions:

- help you to achieve as well in mathematics as you do in English
- reduce the number of occasions you go on holiday in school time, especially at the start of the school year.

Yours sincerely

Tony Byrne
Lead inspector

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