

St Edburg's Church of England (VA) School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123188
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	359383
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2011
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Duckworth
Headteacher	Damian Booth
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons or part lessons were visited and ten teachers observed. Inspectors held meetings with leaders and managers; the School Improvement Partner; the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body; staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a variety of documentation, including: the school's improvement plan; policies and procedures, particularly those concerning safeguarding; data showing the progress that pupils are making; and evidence from the school's own monitoring as well as that of the School Improvement Partner. Questionnaires returned by 38 parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by pupils in Years 3 to 6 and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of initiatives to raise pupils' attainment and progress in writing.
- The progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 to see whether it is as good as that in Years 3 to 6 appears to be, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The relative progress of boys and girls in Years 3 to 6.

Information about the school

The very large majority of pupils at this smaller than average primary school are White British. The remainder represent a wide range of heritages. Very few speak English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average at 25%. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at times other than the usual is above average. The school runs a breakfast club on four mornings a week. The headteacher is supporting another local school and is acting as executive headteacher across both schools as part of a temporary collaborative arrangement.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Edburg's has made considerable progress since its last inspection. It is now a good school. There are a number of significant strengths. For instance, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are thoughtful and careful in their actions, and particularly impressive is the way that older pupils look after younger ones willingly and with sensitivity. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe in school. They are very conscious of what constitutes an unsafe situation and say that there is always someone to turn to for help if they have a problem. There are very effective partnerships which support both pupils' welfare and their learning. For example, very close relationships have been forged with a wide range of agencies to support vulnerable pupils. There are also unusual links, for instance with the John Ratcliffe Hospital in Oxford, which provides training for pupils in first aid and avoiding incidents, and with the Bicester Children's University, which provides extra opportunities, such as enabling pupils to learn disc-jockeying skills, and extended services such as holiday courses.

A particular improvement since the last inspection has been in the progress that pupils make. This is now consistently good through the school, if anything being a little quicker in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' writing has been a focus during this time and initiatives have been partly effective in raising pupils' attainment and accelerating their progress. However, although attainment is now average and pupils' progress is generally good in both writing and mathematics, they fall short of the levels pupils reach in reading.

There have also been improvements in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is good and these pupils make good progress relative to their abilities. Some are making exceptional progress so that levels of support can be reduced. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys, the difference in the national tests in Year 6 last year being due to the relative abilities of the pupils in that cohort. In 2009, attendance rates were low and there was a much higher than average proportion of persistent absentees. However, the school has worked hard to address this and attendance is now average and the proportion of persistent absentees is below average. There is still work to be done though, as learning for some pupils is being adversely affected by absence.

Pupils make good progress because teaching is effective. Almost all teaching observed was good or better as it has many strengths. For instance, there are excellent relationships between pupils and adults and this creates a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms; there is a very evident willingness for pupils to learn. Teachers also make good use of paired and group discussions so that pupils have the opportunity to embed their learning by talking about it. However, on occasions teachers talk for too long and pupils spend too long sitting listening and insufficient time engaged in focused written or practical tasks.

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The school has very thorough self-evaluation procedures. All staff who completed questionnaires said that they feel involved in the process. Governors also have good monitoring procedures and play a full role in the development of the school's self-evaluation. All staff and governors, led most ably by the headteacher and senior leaders, have created a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development and this, along with the evidence of continuing improvements, clearly indicates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in Years 1 to 6, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write for longer periods and for their writing to be based on first-hand experiences within the next six months
 - ensuring that pupils have a clearer understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve their work in mathematics within the next six months
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use time well to enable pupils to be actively working for longer periods rather than discussing or listening.
- Work together with parents and other agencies to improve some pupils' rates of attendance so that attendance rates for the current academic year are at least 95%.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start in the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. However, in several aspects of communication, language and literacy, these skills are even lower compared to expectations for their age. Pupils generally make good progress through the school, particularly in their reading and leave with average attainment. Progress in writing and aspects of mathematics is not always as quick.

Learning in lessons is typified by lively engagement and enjoyment. This was seen in a Year 5 English lesson, where regularly changing activities led to pupils' enthusiastic responses. It was also noted regularly in many lessons when pupils had opportunities to discuss with their talk partners. These opportunities were taken sensibly and lively and relevant discussions were seen, which helped pupils to increase their understanding. Pupils work sensibly and willingly when given independent or group tasks, often starting without prompting, and levels of concentration seen were almost always high.

Pupils are developing well into sensible and responsible young citizens. Their spiritual development is particularly strong, with pupils appreciating opportunities for prayer and reflection. This is giving them a keen sense of their place in the world and society. Pupils' awareness of the range of cultures represented in the United Kingdom, while good, is an area for development. Pupils make a strong contribution to the smooth running of the school community and are involved well in the local community, particularly the church.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

The school is working hard to further develop both writing and mathematics and has already started to plan so pupils have more first-hand experiences on which to base their writing and to enable them to write for more extended periods. The school is well aware of the need to develop the curriculum further in this aspect and also to provide more occasions when pupils can practise their writing skills in other subjects. Although pupils, particularly the older ones, are very well aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve in writing, this is not the case in mathematics and this is an area for development.

All adults know their pupils extremely well and they keep very careful records of how well they are doing, both in terms of their learning and their personal development. This good assessment of learning enables potential underachievement to be addressed. Good strategies are in place to help those in danger of falling behind and the effectiveness of these strategies is monitored closely.

Levels of care, guidance and support for pupils are good. In some aspects they are outstanding. For example, the individualised support for vulnerable pupils is very strong and enables these pupils to play a full role in the life of the school. There are also very good procedures to help pupils who join the school in older year groups settle in and this was noted positively by more than one parent or carer.

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

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides very strong leadership and ambition, which is communicated and shared very well by all staff and governors. The staff work very much as a team and all are empowered to use their own initiative and contribute fully to the management process. Senior leaders have put in place a number of effective initiatives, which are monitored well to ensure they continue. These programmes have been very successful in improving provision and many, but not quite all, aspects of pupils' progress. Governors have their own programme of monitoring and regular meetings set aside when they evaluate their evidence and contribute to the school's self-evaluation. The governing body contains a good range of experience and expertise and it supports and challenges well.

Equality of opportunity has a high profile in the school, as evidenced by the virtual elimination of differences in performance between groups. Racial incidents or harassment are very rare, although some pupils' awareness of others from differing cultures is occasionally limited. Safeguarding procedures are very secure. Training and policies in this area are in good order and staff and governors are vigilant about safe practices and recruitment. The school is an extremely cohesive community and there are very close links with the local community, particularly the church. However, the promotion of the diversity of the wider United Kingdom community is sometimes limited. The school works hard to involve parents and carers in their children's learning, but this is not always successful. While parents and carers receive good information, the need to be more creative, in planning events to help them understand how they can support their children for example, is recognised.

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

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have a good start in the Reception class. They make good progress and in many areas of learning, their attainment reaches average levels by the time they start in Year 1. However, this is not the case in some aspects of their communication, language and literacy because of their low starting points.

Children's good progress is due to good teaching and provision. A clear plan of building children's phonic skills, the sounds that letters make, prepares them well to make a start at reading and writing. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage skills of speaking and listening. Children were observed thoroughly enjoying annotating their superhero pictures. They also very much enjoyed their time in the information and communication technology suite, where they explored the use of computers to write. Both inside and outside areas are spacious and used well with a good range of activities on offer.

Communication with parents and carers is good, with home/school daily sheets so that parents can pass and receive messages. Parents and carers are very positive about the provision. Leadership and management of this stage are good, with clear plans for development and good daily monitoring.

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

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

There was a slightly lower than average response to the questionnaires, though the responses received were extremely positive. Parents and carers are particularly pleased that their children enjoy school, with the quality of teaching and how their children are prepared for their future. No significant concerns were expressed, though a very small minority think that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with well. Evidence from the inspection found that behaviour is outstanding and that unacceptable behaviour is handled effectively; there is very good support for those pupils who find behaving consistently well difficult.

Many parents or carers made positive comments, such as: 'My child loves this school and is excited about going every day' any issues we have ever had have been dealt with by the staff brilliantly' and 'The teachers and teaching assistants are excellent providing me with detailed feedback on my child's progress.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Edburg's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 156 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	66	13	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	50	17	45	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	58	13	34	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	55	17	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	50	17	45	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	58	13	34	1	3	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)	22	58	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	58	15	39	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	45	17	45	7	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	34	18	47	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	47	17	45	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	63	12	32	1	3	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



13 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Edburg's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) School, Bicester OX26 6BB

Thank you so much for all your help and your very warm and polite welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you and hearing what you had to tell us about your school. We are not surprised that you enjoy it so much because it is a good school.

We were really impressed with how well you behave. It was very good to see older pupils helping younger ones so willingly and it is something that you do really well. You told us that you feel extremely safe and that you always have someone to turn to if you have a problem. You have very many opportunities that pupils in other schools may not have because of the links that the school has. For instance, we thought that the work with the hospital in Oxford is really good that enables some of you to become first aiders. I also enjoyed the class guitar lesson with the visiting teacher.

You are making good progress because you are being taught well. Your teachers know each of you very well and look after you really well. Your headteacher, governors and all the staff have very good plans to keep making your school better and better.

There are two things that could be improved.

- Although you generally make good progress it could be better in writing and mathematics. In writing you need more opportunities to write longer stories and pieces of work and in mathematics you need to know more clearly how well you are doing and how to improve your work. There are times in lessons when you spend too long sitting listening before getting on with your work.
- Some of you need to attend school more regularly so you can make the progress of which you are capable.

I know you will help by continuing to work hard and you could ask your teachers to explain to you how to improve in mathematics.

Yours sincerely

John Eadie

Lead inspector

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