

Marsh Baldon Church of England Controlled School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123131
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	359369
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Benton
Headteacher	Nick Pitson
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 lessons with four teachers being seen. Meetings were held with the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 49 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- The progress made by all groups of pupils to see if the improving trend in progress and achievement is being sustained across all classes.
- The features of assessment and tracking that are helping to boost pupils' progress.
- The roles of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, in securing and sustaining improvements, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and progress in mathematics.
- The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage to establish if improvements to provision are having an impact on children's learning and progress.

Information about the school

This small village primary school admits pupils from a wide area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and are taught in three mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities varies considerably from year to year and is similar to that found nationally. Most have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication needs. The school has achieved Healthy School Status and the Activemark for sport.

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

This is a good school where pupils make good progress and achieve well. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree. One parent or carer, representing the views of many, commented, 'This is a small school but a very good one. We are very pleased with the education our daughter is getting.' Another added that, 'Overall I am really happy with the ethos of the school, its supportive and community atmosphere and the dedication of the teaching team.'

Satisfactory at its last inspection, the school has improved markedly in many areas of its work. Significant improvement has been made to the quality of teaching and learning, the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and leadership and management. This means the school is now dismantling barriers to learning with skill and determination and has successfully ironed out inconsistencies in the progress from year to year.

Despite the year-on-year fluctuation in the attainment of year groups, which is a common feature of small schools, pupils achieve well and are enthusiastic learners. All groups of pupils, including the most able and those who find learning difficult, make good progress. Pupils in the current Year 6 are well on track to attain broadly average standards this year. This represents good progress and achievement for this cohort.

These successes are underpinned by improvements in the quality of teaching and learning which is good. Teachers use assessment information effectively to match work to the different abilities within the mixed-age classes. They accurately track pupils' performance and use this information well to identify underachievement and then do something about it. However, on some occasions, teachers miss opportunities for pupils, especially the higher attainers, to explore their own ideas or do not give them enough time to do so. This means that pupils do not always develop independence in their learning or use their initiative as well as they should.

Pupils are well cared for and feel secure and happy. Safeguarding procedures are of outstanding quality. As a consequence, pupils enjoy coming to school, feel extremely safe and behave well. The school's strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, recognised in its national awards, ensures that pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Their attendance is above average.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community and are broadening their understanding of the wider community. However, opportunities to increase their understanding of cultural diversity in contrasting locations within the United Kingdom are not yet as well developed.

Teachers are working successfully to increase the opportunities for creativity and enjoyment within the curriculum by making links between subjects so that learning is purposeful and captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm. However, there are still missed

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opportunities within planning to exploit fully opportunities for independent learning. Pupils find the targets they are given helpful because it gives them something to aim for and helps them to gauge how well they are doing. Although their books are marked regularly, the teachers' written comments do not always clearly explain how their work could be improved.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, staff and governors have high expectations of what is achievable and show a strong determination to drive improvement so that all pupils reach their potential. The most important areas for improvement have been accurately identified and appropriate and effective actions are being taken to tackle the issues. The school's good track record at including all learners, dismantling barriers to learning and ensuring better progress for all pupils means there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers capitalise on opportunities during lessons for pupils, especially the higher attainers, to work independently to explore their own ideas and use their initiative in order to sustain their rapid progress.
- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently gives pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Strengthen the links with contrasting locations within the United Kingdom to deepen pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' good behaviour and their willingness and ability to work independently or with their classmates underpin the positive climate for learning in all classes. Inspection evidence shows that the recent dip in performance in mathematics has been well addressed and all groups are making good progress across the school.

Children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding that vary considerably from year to year and range from below to fairly typical for their age. Improvements for their provision are enabling children to make good progress and achieve well. This provides a good start to their future learning and is now being built on well across all classes. Inspection evidence shows that all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who find learning difficult, are now making good progress and achieving well from their individual starting points. This has also been confirmed by recent monitoring of all classes by the local authority and the school. As one pupil said, 'I really enjoy school because teachers make learning fun and we learn from each other. We are encouraged to take responsibility for our own actions and learn from our mistakes.'

During a mathematics lesson, for example, older pupils explained how the teacher was introducing more problem solving and how she was encouraging them to assess for themselves how well they are learning. They were unanimous that, 'This really helps you improve as it gives you something to aim for and you are able to test out your own ideas and find solutions.' Some younger children were investigating lines of symmetry in two-dimensional shapes. One said, 'I really enjoy this activity because I can experiment by folding paper and can check my results using a mirror.' They were fully engaged because they were given work that provided the right level of challenge and involved them in

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practical activities that captured their interest. Everyone helped and supported each other well.

Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and contribute to the positive ethos for learning. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy learning. They are proud of their school and take their responsibilities very seriously. They listen, respect and value each other's opinions and have a good understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Their very positive attitudes for learning and well-developed skills at cooperating and helping each other mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
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?

In the most successful lessons, teaching promotes pupils' creativity, independence and self-awareness. For example, older pupils were recording podcasts about global warming for the class radio located on the school website. The teacher used every opportunity to extend pupils' learning and moved from group to group helping, clarifying and moving learning on at a brisk rate. Those who initially had difficulty organising themselves were supported well by the teaching assistant so they could fully access the learning. Pupils say they learn much better this way because it is both challenging and fun. However, there are sometimes too many missed opportunities in some lessons for pupils to solve problems and explore their own ideas, so their progress is not as rapid as it should be.

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The school has carefully adapted the curriculum to make it challenging, relevant and exciting by making links between the different areas of learning. An excellent range of additional activities enriches the curriculum, particularly in sport. They include opportunities for archery, computing, football, athletics, music, choir, hand bells, art and chess. There is also a strong tradition of outdoor learning including residential visits to Devon and Wales. However, the curriculum does not yet identify sufficient opportunities for pupils to use their initiative to solve problems to ensure they are always fully challenged.

The school takes good care of pupils. There are good partnerships with outside agencies to get additional support when it is needed. Skilled teaching assistants also make a good contribution to the learning of pupils who need extra help with their work. Several parents wrote or spoke to the inspectors about the very good support their children receive. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure the smooth entry of children into Reception, as well as into secondary school when they leave at the end of Year 6.

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 strong impact of leadership is seen in how effectively the headteacher is embedding ambition and driving improvement. He has, for example, successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning and taken effective actions to raise achievement since the last inspection. Teachers are increasingly effective at monitoring the progress of pupils within their areas of responsibility and taking effective action to address underachievement. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and careful self-evaluation has led to the accurate identification of key areas for improvement.

Leaders and governors take very seriously their responsibility to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination, and the success of this commitment is evident in the way barriers to learning have been effectively tackled. Consequently, pupils are now achieving their challenging targets and the gap between the performance of boys and girls is narrowing rapidly.

Governors are knowledgeable and experienced and provide a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. They ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are outstanding and that all statutory requirements, including child protection and risk assessment, are regularly reviewed and approved.

The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is good. The school is good at promoting pupils' understanding from local, national and global perspectives. While links

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with contrasting communities within the United Kingdom are at an early stage of development, they illustrate the school's commitment in this area as well as exemplifying its good range of partnerships with others.

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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children quickly adapt to school routines and learn to play and work together happily within the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. They make good progress and achieve well because teaching is good. The current cohort of children are well on track to attain the expectations for their age group when they join Year 1 but this can vary from below to above average. This is because cohorts are small and assessment data are often based on the performance of small numbers of children. Children respond well to the challenges that are planned for them and thoroughly enjoy learning. For example, one group of children was enthusiastically sorting model animals into categories such as those found on a farm, in a zoo or in the wild. They spoke about them with clarity and described, for example, the wolf as hungry and able to run fast. The adults were good at using questions to prompt responses and develop vocabulary. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to develop creative and enquiry skills during child-initiated activities and phonic sessions.

Improvements to the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage have had a positive impact on children's learning and progress. Both the inside and outside areas are used well to develop children's social skills and understanding in all aspects of their learning. Children show positive attitudes to learning, form good relationships with others and remain engaged in activities often finding out things for themselves. There is a good range of equipment and resources to suit all abilities. However, they are not easily accessible due to lack of storage space. This means there are missed opportunities for children to develop independence by selecting resources for themselves.

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Adults use assessment information well to track children's learning and to identify the next steps in learning. This represents good improvement since the last inspection when teachers were asked to take more account of the needs of differing abilities within the class. There is a good balance of activities that are led by the adults and those that the children choose for themselves. The provision is well led and managed and the adults work well together as a team.

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

The response rate to the questionnaire was high. The very large majority of parents and carers are positive about the school and its friendly atmosphere. All indicated that their children were happy at school and were kept safe. The inspectors fully endorse these views. There were many written comments in praise of the school. The school has started to improve ways of helping parents and carers to support their children's learning. A session for families of the youngest children has already been held. This has been evaluated and is shortly to be rolled out across the school. A small number of constructive criticisms were shared and discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marsh Baldon Church of England Controlled 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	59	20	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	71	14	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	41	24	49	5	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	37	24	49	7	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	29	32	65	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	29	25	51	9	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	53	23	47	0	0	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)	17	35	25	51	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	41	20	41	7	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	35	27	55	4	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	35	23	47	7	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	41	22	45	6	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	41	26	53	3	6	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.



10 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marsh Baldon Church of England Controlled School, Oxford OX44 9LJ

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking to so many of you. I was pleased to hear that you like your school very much. Almost all your parents and carers are happy with the school too.

Yours is a good school, where staff and governors are working hard to make it even better. This means that there are lots of things that it does really well, but also that there are some things that could be even better.

I was particularly impressed that you are proud of your school and want to do well. You behave well and help and support each other in all that you do. This means that your teachers can get on with teaching you new things and are not distracted by any misbehaviour. You also told me that you find your lessons interesting and usually challenging. To make them even better, however, I am asking your teachers to give you even more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently so that you can make even faster progress. I have also asked them to give you a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work when they mark your books.

Your teachers are also going to build even more links with schools within the United Kingdom where there is a different mix of people, different cultures and different beliefs so that you can have first-hand knowledge of what it means to live in a multiracial community.

Each of you can play a part in making your school even better by continuing to work hard to meet the targets teachers set you.

Yours sincerely

John Earish

Lead inspector

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