

# Sonning CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number110016Local AuthorityWokinghamInspection number363761

Inspection dates17–18 May 2011Reporting inspectorRob Crompton

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

Type of school Primary

School category Foundation

Age range of pupils 4–11

Gender of pupils Mixed

**Gender of pupils** Mixed **Nu mber of pupils on the school roll** 198

**Appropriate authority** The governing body

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### Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed seven teachers. Inspectors held meetings with governors and staff and talked with pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. Inspectors examined questionnaires from 99 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- The attainment of current pupils to see whether the recent above average levels of attainment are on course to be sustained.
- The outcomes and provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to explore the accuracy of the school's judgement that overall effectiveness is outstanding.
- Teachers' marking, to see if pupils receive sufficient feedback and guidance on what they need to do to improve.

#### Information about the school

Sonning Church of England Primary is smaller than the average for a primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds, but none is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these pupils have behavioural or social difficulties and others have speech and communication problems. The school has Healthy Schools status. Privately managed breakfast and after-school clubs operate on the school site.

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

1

# **Main findings**

Pupils enjoy coming to this good school. They behave well and derive great benefit from the welcoming and supportive learning environment, underpinned by the school's outstanding success in engaging with parents and carers. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is seen in their high levels of attendance. They feel extremely safe and secure within the family atmosphere. The vast majority of parents and carers who replied to the inspection questionnaire, or who met with the inspectors, expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school and their children's experience. One, capturing the views of many, said, 'We are really delighted with the school and our children's development.'

An outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make an excellent start to school. Due to careful early assessments, children begin to make good progress immediately. This good progress continues as pupils whatever their ability or background move through the school, and attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is confirmed both by first-class school tracking information and the work inspectors observed across the school.

Pupils are very well aware of how to evaluate their success in learning. The extremely effective use of assessment information to identify where additional teaching will be most beneficial makes a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement. One particularly notable aspect of the school's outstanding care for pupils is the very effective support provided for those who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances; this ensures that they keep up with classmates.

Because much has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning, most teaching is good and some is outstanding. However, the quality is not consistent throughout the school. There is more still to do to ensure that the more able pupils are provided with opportunities to work independently on activities that challenge them consistently. Teaching assistants are well qualified and experienced, and play a strong role in supporting individuals and groups, although their expertise is not always used to the best effect during lesson introductions and summaries.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with the strong support of all staff, the governing body and others with leadership responsibilities, has steered the school highly effectively. The strategies for tackling the school's improvement priorities have been very successful and the school's effectiveness in important areas has improved since the last inspection. The school's view of itself is highly accurate and its record of raising achievement shows it is in an excellent position to build on its strengths, and indicates an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the independence, particularly of the more able pupils, by:
  - allowing more opportunities for them to tackle tasks without too much support at the outset
  - providing a good level of challenge from the beginning of lessons, rather than have them complete work which covers old ground
  - increasing opportunities for them to pursue open-ended tasks at home.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to contribute individual ideas and ask questions by:
  - reducing the time teachers spend talking to the whole class at the beginning of lessons
  - deploying support staff more frequently to introduce new work to small groups.

# Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most pupils enjoy learning and achieve well. Levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 are above average, with some pupils making exceptional progress from their starting points. Pupils sustain their engagement and rise to the challenges offered. Year 2 pupils, for example, showed great enthusiasm during a pond-dipping expedition in a nearby nature reserve. 'Look, look, I've found a dragon fly nymph!' exclaimed one. During a Year 4 numeracy lesson, pupils delighted in playing 'decimal play your cards right' and were keen to demonstrate their numeracy skills when putting numbers such as 4.5, 2.07 and 6.181 in the correct order. When asked to identify numbers which after repeated subtraction of 3 would result in -12, one pupil correctly offered 8811. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning was also seen as the Year 5 class created their own success criteria when planning group performances of The Highwayman by Alfred Noyes.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. The few pupils who have social, behavioural or communication difficulties benefit from targeted support in lessons and extra one-to-one tuition. For the most part, they sustain their engagement, but sometimes their attention wanders and very occasionally this has a ripple effect on the rest of the class.

Pupils are well prepared for their next schools. They are well equipped with basic skills and happily cooperate when working in groups. Healthy Schools status is reflected in pupils' excellent knowledge of the importance of keeping safe and healthy. They take part in a wide range of physical activities and are well informed about the impact of exercise on the heart's ability to ensure good circulation. Older pupils are aware of the potential hazards in using the internet but the school is rightly concerned that some are allowed access to social networking sites when at home. Pupils take pride in the wide range of jobs that they carry out, such as being members of the school council, helping others in their roles as peer mediators, and working with the green team. They show good levels of autonomy when carrying out these roles, but their independence is less evident during lessons. Within the school's Christian ethos, pupils develop strong moral values. They gain a good awareness and understanding of their own and others' beliefs, although their awareness of how diverse groups of people live in this country is less secure.

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:	2	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>		
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		
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	2	
their future economic well-being		
Taking into account:	1	
Pupils' attendance 1	1	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 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?

Pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is mostly good and often outstanding. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace with a good variety of approaches that keep pupils engaged. Lessons are planned very well, taking account of pupils' different starting points. During a numeracy lesson in Year 3, for example, pupils made rapid progress in problem solving as the work was pitched exactly at the right level. Pupils are frequently grouped by ability for phonics work in Years 1 to 3 and for mathematics in Years 4 to 6. Some more able Year 3 pupils work alongside Year 4 for mathematics. This also helps teachers to provide a good level of challenge for each group. In these sets and in class-based lessons, the more able pupils are generally set more demanding tasks. Sometimes, however, they spend too long covering old ground during lesson introductions rather than tackling challenging work straight away. Occasionally, they are given too many hints on how to set about tasks, which constrains their skills in using what they already know to find solutions independently.

A very successful drive to improve assessment means that pupils are well aware of the next steps they need to take to improve. Teachers frequently provide excellent feedback in their marking, praising good work and suggesting ways even very good work could be further improved. Pupils proudly showed their target folders which teachers sign when

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

their individual goals are reached. The school is, rightly, focused on using the wealth of assessment information to further tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs.

Staff provide curriculum activities that engage pupils, provide memorable experiences, and promote their learning and personal development. Pupils in Year 2 talked enthusiastically, for example, about a recent project which involved girls dressing up and taking the role of Florence Nightingale and the boys acting as wounded soldiers. Parents and carers were sent excellent guidance about how they might support their children's learning about this topic; a good example of how homework is used to support classroom learning. There are some inconsistencies in this regard, however, as some more able pupils felt the tasks could be more interesting with less emphasis on routine worksheets. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate their literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Drawing on a range of sources, teachers are in the process of devising a curriculum structure that continues to do so while allowing the greatest flexibility in responding to pupils' interests and local circumstances. This approach is not yet fully embedded and staff are, rightly, drawing on their experiences so far to refine their strategies.

The way staff are keen to further adapt the curriculum in the light of pupils' individual learning needs and interests is indicative of the outstanding care, support and guidance they provide. Support is provided straight away for any pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. The special needs coordinator works closely with class teachers to help ensure that appropriate support is provided, both internally and through external agencies. Feedback comment from a recent parent survey indicates how supportive the school is. One typical comment was, 'Although my child is currently experiencing difficulties at school I feel that the school is listening to us and looking for ways to help him.'

#### These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	
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	1

# How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels have worked very successfully since the previous inspection. The good provision and outcomes have been sustained, with some aspects that are now outstanding, such as the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the tracking of pupils' progress. There is a clear sense of direction. Through rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and very careful tracking of pupils' progress, the school recognises its strengths and ensures that weaknesses are properly identified and promptly addressed.

Procedures to ensure pupils are safe in school are firmly embedded. The governing body plays an important role in this by visiting the school regularly to check on the effectiveness

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

of the safeguarding policy, and carrying out health and safety audits to the premises. The thorough way that staff check carefully the progress of all pupils reflects the school's strong and successful commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. Any emerging differences in the achievement of different groups are quickly identified and promptly addressed.

The governing body provides highly effective support and challenge. Governors are linked to every class and meet with the parent representative and class teacher as part of the Link Forum and form a joint advisory group. This provides a very useful conduit of information between all parties. Members of the governing body regularly see the school in action, gathering first-hand evidence for self-evaluation. Links with other schools and agencies are harnessed very effectively to provide valuable additional experiences for pupils, for example in art, sport and music. Staff increasingly share their expertise with colleagues from other schools.

The school plays a central role in the life of the church and the neighbourhood, and pupils' sense of community is promoted well from a local perspective. Staff are pursuing links with other schools to provide pupils with insights into diverse communities within the United Kingdom.

#### These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination		
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money		

# **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children get off to an excellent start. They make consistently good progress and reach levels that are above those expected by the end of the Reception year. They play extremely well together and are happy to take on responsibilities such as organising resources. They show great enthusiasm as they choose from the good range of activities on offer, often showing initiative as they pursue their own interests. They talk readily to staff and visitors, reflecting their confidence and growing vocabulary. Children make very

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

good headway in early reading and writing skills due to systematic teaching of letters and sounds. Their early writing includes many examples of children making credible attempts at spelling, such as 'becos', 'plees' and 'dragn'. Their mathematical skills are also promoted very effectively. When looking at nine flowers arranged in order of size, one child identified 'the middleist'. Prompted by a volunteer parent to offer her opinion, his classmate said, 'It's the medium, because medium means the middle.'

Children arrive each day to a stimulating, varied and well-organised learning environment. Safe and well-tended indoor and outdoor learning environments encourage children to investigate, learn and develop among a wide range of varied resources. Parents and carers are welcome to accompany their children and they stay for a while when necessary. Activities are particularly well planned to achieve a very good balance of indoor and outdoor learning. A wide range of resources supported learning around the theme of castles, for example. These included a wooden castle in the outdoor area and helmets, shields and princess costumes for dressing up.

As well as very successfully encouraging children to follow their own interests, adults lead stimulating activities, taking every opportunity to engage them in conversations. During a class discussion about food, children confidently offered their contributions. 'I like pork chops, salad and carrots', said one, while another remarked, 'We need milk to have strong bones and energy'. Such discourse enables staff to draw out and extend children's knowledge and understanding. Children develop great confidence in using computers. This was evident as they quickly identified the computer as a good way to create their diaries to record the growth of the beans they had planted prompted by Jack and the Beanstalk.

Adults record children's progress across all areas of learning though regular observations, collecting samples of their work and, when possible, photographing significant moments. Each child has their own CD which most parents and carers regularly update with news and photographs that add to the school records. Highly effective management means adults work well as a team and share a vision about what can be done to enhance children's learning experiences.

#### These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:  Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

# Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned was above average. The large majority of parents and carers were entirely positive in their views of the school. They felt their children enjoyed school and were happy with their children's overall experience. A few expressed concerns, including those about behaviour management, progress, whether the school fully meets their children's needs and how well the school engages with parents

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

and carers. Inspectors followed up concerns about behaviour by observing pupils during lessons, breaks, in the dining room and during after-school clubs. They spoke at length with groups of pupils. The evidence showed that teachers generally manage pupils' behaviour skilfully, particularly in ensuring that the very few pupils with behavioural problems do not unduly disturb their classmates. Inspectors found that pupils' academic and personal needs are met very well and that all groups of pupils make good academic progress. The inspection established that parents and carers have every opportunity to engage with the school.

#### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sonning Church of England Primary 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 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	58	37	37	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	62	37	37	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	43	49	49	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	37	47	47	9	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	42	42	44	44	7	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	45	42	42	9	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	41	49	49	7	7	1	1
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)	29	29	56	57	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	37	49	49	8	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	38	44	44	9	9	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	39	43	43	13	13	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	46	46	44	44	7	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	48	41	41	6	6	1	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**

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)					
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate		
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0		
Primary schools	6	47	40	7		
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11		
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3		
Special schools	28	49	19	4		
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10		
All schools	10	46	37	7		

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see <a href="https://www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a>).

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.

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	s of a pupil in their	learning,
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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: 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.

■ 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.



21 May 2011

#### **Dear Pupils**

### Inspection of Sonning Church of England Primary School, Reading RG4 6XF

Thank you for the help you gave us with the recent inspection of your school and for the very friendly way you received us. We spoke to many of you and you were very helpful in sharing your views. We enjoyed particularly watching you learn in lessons and seeing your enjoyment in assembly. The survey that the junior pupils completed mostly matched what the school leaders think of the school. The majority of you thought that behaviour was good but others did not. This is why we spent a lot of time observing lessons and breaks and talking to groups of you about it. We found that almost all of you behave really well and that teachers are very good at helping those who find it difficult to concentrate and make progress.

Yours is a good school. Most of you enjoy learning, listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and work hard in your lessons. You make rapid gains in your learning in Reception and continue to make good progress as you move through the school. By the end of Year 6 you reach above average standards. You understand the importance of being healthy: you eat sensibly and eagerly take part in physical activities. You work and play well together and willingly help each other. We were also impressed with how willing you all are to help the school, especially those who help at playtimes and in the classrooms and those of you involved in the school council and green team.

Adults at school look after you exceptionally well, so that you are safe and happy. Your headteacher, all the other staff and the governing body are determined to make things even better. We have suggested that some of you could be encouraged to be a little more independent and given more demanding work which really challenges you. Teachers plan some really interesting activities and make learning fun. We think there could be more opportunities for you to contribute your own ideas in smaller groups and have suggested that the teaching assistants could play a greater part in this. You can all play your part by continuing to work hard and taking advantage of all the exciting things the school has to offer.

We send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

**Rob Crompton** 

Lead inspector

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