

Culham Parochial Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123132
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	359370
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Churchill-Stone
Headteacher	Matthew Attree (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited six lessons and observed four different teachers. He held meetings with a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, members of staff and officers of the local authority, and spoke to parents and carers. He observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the school's provision for safeguarding (the care and protection of pupils), the school's self-evaluation, the development plan and minutes of the governing body. He looked at the analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, and external evaluations of the school. He also examined evidence relating to the recent negotiations concerning the future of the school. The inspector analysed responses from 19 parental questionnaires and other written responses from pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key questions.

- Do all pupils make enough progress in mathematics by the time they leave the school?
- How is the small number of children and pupils in the school affecting their quality of education and personal development?
- How effective is the school's present structure of leadership and management, in particular, the ability of the governing body to shape the direction of the school?
- How much are parents and carers involved in supporting the school, and contributing to decisions on the future well-being and development of their children?

Information about the school

Culham is much smaller than most primary schools. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, the largest group having moderate learning difficulties. All classes have mixed-age groups.

The school has been unable to appoint a permanent headteacher for nearly three years, and has had two acting headteachers during this time. A third acting headteacher was appointed just over a week before the inspection. Three temporary teachers have been appointed because of the long-term absence, through illness, of other staff. The number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly during the last year, especially in Years 4 to 6. The school has been issued recently with a statutory notice of closure to take effect from July this year. The governing body is appealing against this proposal. A privately run pre-school group, which was not inspected, is on the school site.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Culham is a satisfactory school which has faced significant challenges in the last three years. In spite of several attempts by the governing body, the school has been unable to appoint a substantive headteacher, and negotiations to join in a federation with another nearby school have also failed. The future of the school remains uncertain, but nevertheless the school staff, in spite of some long-term sickness, have continued to give pupils a satisfactory education. Leaders have maintained a good standard of care and guidance to meet the needs of all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable. The pupils enjoy each day, shown by their consistently above average attendance. They have good attitudes to learning, and all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Their behaviour is good and they are active in their school and local community. The present acting headteacher, with the considerable support of the local authority, has ensured that the school has made all possible efforts to maintain its strengths and seek improvement in areas of priority. The self-evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and realistic. The capacity to improve is satisfactory, as the leadership has a clear vision of what is necessary to improve the school's work and some actions taken so far have had success. For example, attainment in mathematics has improved recently, as has the outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is more effective tracking of pupils' progress, and the planning of work in classes with wide age ranges and abilities is well focused on the needs of all. Parents and carers are very positive in their views of the school, and have been engaged strongly for some time in supporting their children and the governing body. Typical of many comments is that of the parent who wrote, 'Despite the current situation, the leadership has been proper and effective, and the present team of staff have created a great atmosphere and learning environment.'

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and their progress through the main school is also satisfactory, with signs of accelerated progress for some. Throughout the school although progress in mathematics is better, the school realises that writing skills, especially those of boys, have slipped, often because they have too few opportunities to write extensively. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is average in English and mathematics. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers are thoughtful in their consideration of the needs of their pupils. The school gives pupils an interesting range of experiences through its curriculum. The school is planning that the increase in productive partnerships with other schools will lead to an improved promotion of learning. The school is a very cohesive community, with pupils leaving visitors in no doubt that they are more than happy with their education. However, their understanding of cultural diversity within the United Kingdom and beyond is not well enough developed.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement in writing, especially that of boys, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities for extended writing across a range of different activities planned to stimulate their particular interests.
- Build upon the recent links made with other partner schools so that:
 - the school can develop strategies which enable pupils to develop skills and personal qualities, such as working in teams and organising activities.
- Widen the provision for community cohesion so that:
 - pupils have a better understanding of the range of communities and cultures in this country
 - pupils have more opportunities to learn about global communities and cultures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The school is now focusing effectively on raising the attainment and progress of pupils, especially in mathematics. After joining Year 1 with average skills for their age, pupils make steady progress throughout the rest of the school. Evidence during the inspection suggests that, although the better teaching of problem solving in mathematics has led to improved progress for pupils, there are signs that attainment in writing, especially of boys, has been slipping. The school has recognised this and is looking at ways in which attainment can be improved. At present, for example, pupils do not have enough opportunities for extended imaginative writing as most of their writing is focused on grammar and punctuation. Pupils' speaking skills, especially in Years 1 to 3, are above average, most being confident in expressing their views and talking to adults. Pupils' learning is helped by their very positive attitudes. They say, 'We have new adventurous topics every week, and our teacher does not give us easy work.' They behave well and concentrate hard on learning, such as when pupils in Years 1 and 2 tried to solve the problems of putting different numbers of sheep into pens. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other groups as a result of improved personal learning programmes and planned interventions by teaching assistants, often on a one-to-one basis.

All pupils are confident that the school keeps them safe, saying 'nobody ever leaves the gates open', and understand the need for healthy eating, 'even when we don't want to'. They are caring towards each other and are skilled at making sure that everyone can join in their activities even when they have difficulties. They talk enthusiastically of their activities in the village, such as presenting plays and taking harvest food to the elderly. They are very mindful of the importance of the school and its history to the village. Several commented individually that, 'There has been a school here for 160 years you know, we are very historical.' They enjoy taking responsibilities and talk with pride about their work on the school council, for example when designing the new rope net for the playground. Their enjoyment of school is shown through their consistently good attendance over several years. Pupils are steadily improving their basic skills and personal qualities in preparation for the next stages of their education.

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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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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 quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall, is sometimes good and staff deal with some considerable challenges in an effective manner. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. Every class is small in number and has mixed-age groups. Key Stage 2, for example, has six pupils. However, in the main, teachers are careful to plan for the differing needs of every pupil, and their use of progress data helps in designing suitable learning objectives for all. This was seen in Key Stage 2, where, in spite of a three-year age range, pupils happily worked at decimal problems at varying levels, and learned the rules for identifying odd and even numbers. Teachers are continuing to develop strategies for ensuring that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in their learning. Pupils have considerable adult support, often on a one-to-one basis, from teachers or competent teaching assistants, which helps them in their progress.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum within the confines of limited resources. During the inspection, pupils in Years 2 to 6 were able to extend their learning of rainforests and plant-growing through a visit to Oxford Botanical Gardens. The school provides a number of other creative opportunities, visits and clubs which are appreciated by the pupils. They particularly like visiting other schools, for example to take part in a singing competition, saying 'We were the smallest school, but we did well.' This helps their social and moral education, but there are fewer opportunities for them to develop their cultural learning. The use of skills in English, mathematics and technology across the

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curriculum is satisfactory but pupils have insufficient opportunities to write at length in other subjects.

This is a caring school where pupils in potentially vulnerable circumstances benefit from good quality and sensitive support. Particular care is taken to ensure that all pupils are able to join in all mainstream activities. The school provides a welcoming and homely environment for pupils, which is reflected by their enjoyment of school. The provision for child protection, risk assessment, and health and safety is good, much of it overseen efficiently by the school secretary. Pupils have confidence that they are well prepared for the transition to their next schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has only been in post for a few days, although he has had a number of management responsibilities in the school, mainly in teaching and learning, since September. Together with the part-time executive headteacher, who has now left, he and the staff have worked hard as a team to ensure that the pupils have had a satisfactory education during a time of some difficulty for the leadership of the school. The staff have committed themselves to improvement and have had some success, for example in raising attainment in mathematics and developing more effective strategies to track and measure pupils' progress. More partnerships with other schools have been established. The school's self-evaluation, which has been guided strongly by the school improvement officer, is both accurate and realistic. The governing body has had many challenges in the last three years but has ensured that it fulfils its statutory duties, reviews its policies regularly, has good safeguarding procedures in place, and keeps pupils safe.

The school is making satisfactory progress in promoting equality of opportunity by dealing with some past underachievement, and improving significantly the provision for inclusion of all pupils. There is good engagement with parents and carers, who think highly of the school. Although pupils have good opportunities to contribute to both the school and the immediate community, there are far fewer links with contrasting schools and cultures both in this country and abroad, in order to improve pupils' knowledge and awareness of other more diverse communities.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the skills typical for children of this age, although there can be wide variations between cohorts. They make satisfactory progress, although this has improved recently with the increased stability in staffing. The two teachers and teaching assistants are using daily observations of the children effectively in planning for the personal needs of each child. The teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good, and adults work well as a team. Sometimes, children sit and listen to teachers too long, so lose concentration. However, child-initiated learning is encouraged and children learn to make choices and communicate with each other. The majority of children enter Year 1 at average levels, making most progress in their knowledge of the world and their physical development. Children enjoy their learning, are kept very safe and are willing and inquisitive learners. This was observed when they were hunting for 'minibeasts' and one girl discovered a caterpillar which fascinated her for the remainder of the day. Children join enthusiastically in many activities including music and French. They enjoy working and playing in the outdoor area which has been improved recently. Children also benefit socially through joining frequently with children from the pre-school group, and with pupils from Year 1 who often learn alongside them.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and have been helped by input from advisory teachers. Safeguarding is robust, and staff work closely with parents and carers, especially on the induction of children into the school.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Over three quarters of all parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, an exceptionally high figure. All responses, with the exception of a single disagreement, are wholly positive about the school; 100% of parents strongly agree that their children are kept safe and make enough progress in school. A significant number make very positive written comments about the school, including, for example, 'This wonderful little school offers a superb education for my child who is thriving in this close and secure environment.' The only concern was the school's failure to appoint a permanent headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Culham Parochial 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 inspector received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 25 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	89	2	11	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	95	1	5	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	74	4	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	84	3	16	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)	14	74	4	21	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	95	1	5	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	68	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	68	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	79	3	16	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	95	1	5	0	0	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.



28 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Culham Parochial Church of England Primary School, Abingdon
OX14 4NB**

I would like to thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you, and hearing about how much you enjoy school, which is shown by your above average attendance. You are obviously very proud of your school and know a great deal about its history. I was pleased to hear about how well cared for and safe you feel, and that you make sure that all the gates are kept shut. You go to a satisfactory school where you learn to lead healthy lives and join in with many activities in the local village and the church. By the time you leave school, your attainment is around average in English and mathematics. I think you have improved in mathematics, but you must be careful with your writing as I think it could be better, especially that of the boys. I have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to write longer stories about things that interest you.

I liked that spider's web in the playground, designed by the school council. Like you, your parents and carers are very pleased with your school. They believe, and they are right, that your teachers and acting headteachers have done as much as possible to help you improve in the last year. I have suggested some ways in which the school can improve, and hope that you will help. You could learn more about people in this country and other parts of the world. You seem to be very interested in the world around you so all of you can help your teachers by making your own suggestions about who you want to learn about, and what you want to write about.

I hope that the future of your school will soon be settled and that you will all enjoy your education as much in the future as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite

Lead inspector

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