

Hertingfordbury Cowper Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 117563 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 363873 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 July 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Keith Sadler |

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

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 173 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Caroline Brown |
| Headteacher | Alison Richards |
| Date of previous school inspection | 28 January 2008 |
| School address | Birch Green Hertford SG14 2LR |
| Telephone number | 01992 583239 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 15 lessons led by 10 different teachers. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and from 98 parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

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

- How well do pupils progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2, and are current Year 6 pupils on track to attain their targets?
- How well do teachers use assessments to plan future work?
- How effective is teachers' marking of pupils' work, and have previous inconsistencies been removed?
- What is the role of teachers with particular responsibilities in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures?

Information about the school

This village primary school is of below average size. A minority of pupils live in the village but most come from surrounding villages and nearby towns, particularly Hertford and Welwyn Garden City. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy School status and the Artsmark Gold.

The school has recently increased the number of pupils admitted to each year group to 25. This expansion has enabled pupils to be taught in separate year groups for the first time in the current school year. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of part-time Nursery provision and a Reception class. These children are taught together in a separate unit in the school. There is a pre-school on the site. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school and greatly enjoy learning. The headteacher is an outstanding leader. As a result, staff work exceptionally well together and share her relentless drive for excellence and for giving pupils the very best.

The combination of good teaching, an outstanding curriculum and high quality care guidance and support enables pupils to make good progress and to reach standards that are significantly above average by Year 6. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress in all year groups. Inspection evidence and the school's data show that standards, though already significantly above average, are still rising. In English, the school is successfully closing the small gap between the high standards in reading and those in writing. Standards are also above average in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils make good progress. However, the school is aware that the pupils' well developed calculation skills are not always successfully applied in practical and investigational mathematics problems.

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are thoughtful, articulate and friendly, and their behaviour is excellent. They say that they feel exceptionally safe in school. The school is a highly cohesive community. The school is a highly valued part of the community and contributes exceptionally well to many local and county-wide activities. Pupils relish the many opportunities that are available for them to take responsibility, for example by helping to promote village events and musical concerts and dance, sports and arts festivals within the wider community. Older pupils are particularly proud of the way that they help younger children. As one thoughtful Year 6 pupil said, 'We are the little ones' inspiration and we set a good example so that they can become like us.' They say that they love their school and are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunities they have to learn to play a musical instrument. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in the pupils' high levels of attendance. Learning across the whole curriculum is good and, because pupils have many opportunities to work in pairs and small groups, their inter-personal and speaking and listening skills develop particularly well. These exceptionally well-developed social skills, when linked to their good literacy and numeracy and their strong ICT skills, prepare them exceptionally well for their move to secondary education and life beyond.

Teaching is good and has many strengths, particularly in the teachers' management of pupils and the way that they provide interesting activities that capture the pupils' interest. Teachers routinely prepare different tasks for different pupils, although occasionally their expectations of what the pupils can achieve are not high enough. Most lessons have a good pace and teachers use a variety of approaches to involve pupils fully in their

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learning. However, this is not always the case; in a small number of satisfactory lessons teachers spend too long in introducing or explaining tasks and this slows the pace of learning. The excellence of the partnership between parents and carers and the school was evident during the inspection when a majority of parents and carers attended one of the regular open mornings in order to see their children's learning in operation.

The staff work closely as a team and morale is high. The school's increased effectiveness since the previous inspection is the result of exceptionally thorough monitoring of provision and of pupils' progress, to which all members of staff with leadership responsibilities make a strong contribution. Their accurate evaluations result in a well-focused improvement plan, which is a highly effective tool to drive the school forward. The school's significantly improved overall effectiveness, linked to the commitment of the staff and governors to secure even higher standards and better provision, demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity for sustaining and building on this improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Lift the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high
 - reducing the amount of time that teachers spend introducing lessons and, thereby, raising the pace of learning in the occasional satisfactory lesson
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in practical and investigational problem-solving activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are diligent and thoughtful learners. All groups of pupils respond with enthusiasm to the interesting activities teachers provide, and sustain their concentration well. Their enjoyment of learning was a prominent feature in the lessons seen during the inspection. Pupils talk excitedly about their work and are highly motivated. For example, in an outstanding Year 4 lesson, pupils worked in pairs to plan a magazine advert as part of a unit of work on persuasive writing. Because the teacher provided an excellent context for the activity, pupils concentrated well, their learning was outstanding and they produced high quality work. Because progress is good in all year groups, by the time that they leave school standards are significantly above the national average. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain their challenging targets in English and also in mathematics although pupils' arithmetical knowledge is stronger than their problem solving skills. Standards in art, music and ICT are particularly high because the school's provision in these areas is very strong. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well because the support that they receive in class and, where necessary, on a one-to-one basis, meets their individual needs effectively.

Pupils thrive on the many opportunities that are available for them to take responsibility. For example, Year 6 pupils coach the Key Stage 1 choirs as part of an inter-class choir challenge. The influential school council provides an opportunity for pupils to inform decisions about school organisation, such as proposed changes to playtime arrangements and the introduction of equipment rotas. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what

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constitutes a safe and healthy lifestyle and this is demonstrated by the re-accreditation of the Healthy School status.

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 | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

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?

Pupils are taught well. Inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work have been removed. Teachers identify pupils' successes effectively and give frequent guidance on how to improve. Increasingly, pupils draw up their own criteria for judging how successful their work has been and this promotes their independence in learning. The school's ethos and the way the curriculum supports personal development, with its strong emphasis on personal responsibility, means that pupils are self-disciplined, that levels of mutual respect are high and that pupils willingly rise to the challenge to do their best. The best teaching is outstanding and embodies an exciting focus for learning that engages pupils' interest and stimulates great enthusiasm. Lessons are invariably planned well and pitched at challenging levels, on the basis of thorough assessments of pupils' prior learning. Teachers generally make learning relevant by carefully combining subjects. For example, as part of a Year 6 design technology topic on hats, pupils investigated the relationship between head and body proportions and used their developing understanding of proportion to solve the mystery of the hat thief. Because the context was relevant, pupils learned well and their mathematical understanding was developed effectively. However, this is not always

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the case because too few opportunities are provided for pupils to carry out investigational mathematics.

The curriculum continues to be of outstanding quality. It is enriched significantly by having a strong focus on the visual and performing arts and by a particularly good range of extra-curricular activities. High-quality musical activities are central to the life of the school, with many choirs, instrumental groups and performance opportunities being provided. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 learn to play a musical instrument. The strength of the curriculum for the Arts is recognised through the school gaining the Artsmark Gold award. The school also provides a highly effective programme for personal, social and emotional development, with opportunities for the development of self-confidence and independence through residential educational visits for all pupils in Years 3 to 6. Consequently, pupils are mature, confident and have highly-developed personal skills by the time that they leave the school.

Pupils are cared for and supported exceptionally well. They are very well known to all adults in the school so their well-being is promoted at all times during the day. The school provides a very positive and welcoming learning environment. Parents and carers of pupils who join from other schools are effusive in their praise of the support that their children get when joining the school. There are very productive relationships with a range of outside agencies that the school can call upon whenever there is a need. There is exceptionally strong support for pupils and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

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 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. She is much admired by the whole school community because she provides inclusive and strong leadership. She is ambitious for the school, drives improvement and instils ambition exceptionally well. Consequently, there is a shared determination to move the school forward. Previously, there were weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation role of teachers with leadership responsibilities. This is no longer the case because these members of staff now make a valuable and important contribution to the school's high-quality self-evaluation procedures. This rigorous monitoring provides detailed information about what is needed to improve further the quality of teaching and learning and to maintain the overall rate of school improvement. Ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all is a high priority in this school. This is demonstrated by the in-depth discussions that take place regarding any pupil who does not make expected progress. This approach has resulted in gaps in

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performance being closed for all groups of pupils. In addition, discrimination of any kind is not tolerated; all pupils are fully included in what the school has to offer.

Governance is good. Although there have been a number of changes in the governing body, members have a good understanding of the school's strengths and development points because they ensure that they check for themselves by regularly visiting the school. They ensure that all regulatory requirements are met in full and pay close attention to the safeguarding of pupils. Consequently, the school adopts recommended good practice in staff vetting procedures and in all areas of health and safety.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is highly effective. The school plays an important role in the local community. Events, such as the visit by an Indian dancer and a trip to a local gurdwara give pupils first-hand experience of cultures and beliefs that are different from their own. Pupils' global understanding is developed exceptionally well by curricular projects and themes that focus on different countries and cultures. Their understanding is also supported by the close links that have been established with a school in France and a developing link with a school in South Africa.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with abilities that are generally above the levels that are normally expected of three-year-olds, particularly in their speaking and listening and in their social and emotional development. They make good progress in both Nursery and Reception and, by the time that they enter Year 1, almost all reach the levels expected and a large majority exceeds them. Adults support the children's learning well, particularly by their effective use of open questions when playing alongside children or when children have chosen activities for themselves. This approach enables staff to support and challenge the learning of individual children effectively. While assessments are used well

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to target future learning, this is not always evident when Reception children are taught in whole class sessions. On these occasions, the pace of learning can be slower, with a lack of challenge for the more able children.

Activities are generally well-chosen to interest children and to draw them into purposeful learning. A good range of activities is available in both the indoor and outdoor learning environment. Children are able to make choices and develop independence as they enjoy exploring learning opportunities in an open-ended manner.

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

A high proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Their responses, and inspectors' discussions with parents and carers, indicate that they are unanimous in the view that they are happy with their children's experience at the school, that the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. Many parents and carers wrote highly positive comments about the close 'family' ethos of the school. This was particularly the case for the many families that are delighted that they have moved their children to the school. A few parents and carers stated that they felt that the school does not inform them sufficiently well about their children's progress. This was reviewed as part of the inspection, and the school's arrangements were found to be at least as effective as those typically seen in other schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hertingfordbury Cowper 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 173 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 67 | 68 | 31 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 66 | 67 | 32 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 41 | 42 | 46 | 47 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 51 | 52 | 40 | 41 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 65 | 66 | 30 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 52 | 53 | 40 | 41 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 73 | 74 | 25 | 26 | 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) | 59 | 60 | 33 | 34 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 60 | 61 | 29 | 30 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 58 | 59 | 34 | 35 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 38 | 39 | 51 | 52 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 59 | 60 | 37 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 59 | 60 | 39 | 40 | 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 | 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 www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School, Hertford, SG14 2LR

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you working hard in lessons and getting on so well together. I was so sorry that I couldn't see the whole of your performance of 'Mrs Butler' but I thought you were brilliant in the parts that I saw. I am sure that your parents will have thoroughly enjoyed your singing and acting when they got to see it. The many of you who were kind enough to speak to us showed how proud you are of your school. You are right to be, because it is an outstanding school!

We found that you really enjoy school, behave outstandingly well, attain above average standards and make excellent progress in your personal development. You know all about how to stay safe and to live healthy lives. Your headteacher runs your school exceptionally well and she has excellent support from all the other staff and the governing body. They understand how they could make it even better. Your teachers do a good job too. They teach you well and make sure that your topics are exciting and interesting. Everyone makes sure that you feel really safe in school.

Even in an outstanding school such as yours, there are always some things to do to make it better. We have asked your headteacher to make sure all your lessons are as good as the best. To do this, we have asked teachers to do three things. Firstly, to always have high expectations of what you can do and achieve; secondly, to make sure that your learning is brisk by not spending too long introducing lessons, and finally, to give you more chances to practise your practical mathematics skills. You can help by always trying to do your best.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your education as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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