

Finmere Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123104
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380596
Inspection dates	19–20 October 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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Finder
Headteacher	Veneeta Rayner
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector saw seven lessons or parts of lessons and observed four teachers. He held meetings with senior leaders and representatives of the governing body, and with pupils, members of staff and representatives of the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including monitoring, self-evaluation records, policy documents, the school development plan, teachers' planning, minutes of governing body meetings and samples of pupils' work. A range of documents and records were looked at in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, including case studies of potentially vulnerable pupils. The inspector examined questionnaires returned by 16 parents and carers, 17 pupils and eight members of staff.

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

- He explored the attainment and progress of pupils across the school, especially that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and more-able pupils.
- He considered the effectiveness of teaching in classes with a wide age range, concentrating especially on the breadth and challenge of the curriculum.
- He analysed whether or not there were significant differences in the progress of pupils in different phases of the school.
- He examined the effectiveness of the new structure of leadership and management in the school, especially the role of middle managers and the governing body in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance.

Information about the school

Finmere is much smaller than the average size primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average, the largest group being those who have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than usual is above that seen nationally. The school has three mixed-age classes in the mornings and two in the afternoons. It has had several headteachers and acting headteachers in recent years, and there have been a significant number of staff changes in the last year. The present executive headteacher has been in post since September 2011. This is part of a collaborative arrangement with a nearby school, which also involves two dioceses and two local authorities. The school has Healthy Schools status.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Finmere Church of England Primary provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. The school has gone through an uncertain period for several years, mainly because of the lack of a permanent headteacher. However, during the last 12 months, effective collaboration with a school in Bicester has stabilised the situation and the school has begun to move forward. Another neighbouring school is now working in partnership with a view to establishing a permanent federation. As a result, the school shares its new executive headteacher with this school. She has made an impressive start in accelerating improvement and in building an effective team, several members of which are new to the school. As a result of this skilled and determined leadership, the school is overcoming many of the challenges it faces. The foremost improvement has been the rise in attainment in English and mathematics throughout the school. Pupils now leave the school at the levels expected for their age, although a few of the more-able pupils do not always reach their full potential. More challenging targets are being set for pupils, based upon improved systems for tracking their progress. Good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is succeeding in accelerating their progress. The headteacher has made an accurate and effective evaluation of the school's performance, and has shown much capability in identifying problems and planning solutions. Nevertheless, at present, management responsibilities are insufficiently devolved among the whole staff. The governing body has improved its effectiveness, and is becoming steadily more proactive in challenging the performance of the school. These developments indicate its satisfactory capacity for further sustained improvement.

The school cares for its pupils well, and parents and carers are especially pleased with the support that their children receive. They, like the pupils, feel strongly that pupils are safe in school. Pupils are lively and enthusiastic, enjoy coming to school, as shown by their good attendance, and behave exceptionally well. They make a good contribution to their school and local community and relish all opportunities to take responsibility. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. However, they have too few opportunities to develop their understanding of other communities and different cultures in the wider world.

Teaching is satisfactory, and is improving as a result of rigorous monitoring. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage them effectively. However, they do not always ensure that pupils are challenged sufficiently, and that they understand and can reach their learning targets. Not enough pupils know how to evaluate their own work, or have a say in planning to meet their own individual needs.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the effectiveness of management of the school by devolving more leadership and management responsibilities to other members of staff.
- Build upon the recent improvement in attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, especially those who are more able, reach their challenging targets
 - providing pupils with clear guidance, both verbally and through marking, on how they can improve their work.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning so that most teaching is good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers consistently promote effective pace and challenge in their lessons
 - pupils evaluate their own work, and can identify their own learning needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils respond very positively to their lessons and behave impeccably in classrooms and outside. Even when lessons lack sufficient challenge, pupils always do their best. They cooperate extremely well with each other and have a high sense of responsibility. The local community recognises the outstanding behaviour and helpfulness of the pupils. Pupils' learning and progress, and their achievement, are satisfactory, and improving. The school's present analysis of progress shows that the introduction of more effective intervention strategies by staff is resulting in improved progress by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, too few of the more-able pupils reach the levels of which they are capable by the time they leave. Pupils make good, and in a few cases outstanding, progress in their speaking skills, many being confident and articulate. This was observed in most lessons and also in an assembly, when pupils made many pertinent comments, for example, about the story of the Good Samaritan. It was also seen in a lesson on analysing data, when pupils worked well in small groups, and planned their own presentations.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly average. Their rate of progress is improving, so that at the end of Year 2, their attainment this year, as indicated by outcomes of teacher assessments, was above average. By the end of Year 6, attainment has in the past been below average, but has improved and was in line with national averages this year. This is because progress in all the older year groups is improving, as levels of challenge and expectation steadily rise.

All pupils indicated in their questionnaires and verbally that they feel safe in school

and they all behave safely. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and play a big part in the daily life of the school. Lunchtime helpers sweep the floor and clean the tables willingly. Pupils are also active in the wider community and have raised money for many charities. They have great enthusiasm for sports and healthy lifestyles, the school having gained Healthy Schools status. Attendance and punctuality are consistently good. Pupils are steadily improving their basic skills and are learning how to become independent and to work in teams.

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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and there is evidence of improvement. Some good teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers’ improved analysis of pupils’ performance is giving them a better understanding of the individual needs of each pupil, although this has not yet had a full impact on pupils’ achievement. Relationships between pupils and adults are good, and teachers manage pupils effectively. Pupils, as a result, are well motivated towards their work. An example was observed in the Years 2/3 class when pupils were absorbed in a stimulating lesson on the accurate use of speech marks. However, some teaching lacks sufficient pace and challenge, particularly for more-able pupils. Older pupils are not given sufficient guidance, either verbally or in marking, about how they are doing, or how to improve their work. They also have too few opportunities to evaluate their own and others’ work.

School leaders have correctly recognised that the curriculum could be developed further in order to strengthen pupils’ basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils do have some exciting enrichment activities, which they talk about enthusiastically. These include their sporting activities and their frequent trips to, for example,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Warwick Castle and the local chocolate factory. The school also recognises that the spacious grounds, which pupils appreciate, could be used to greater effect as a rich learning resource. The school makes very careful provision for the mixed age groups in every class, especially ensuring that younger pupils do not repeat tasks as they move through the school. A strength of the curriculum is the provision for spiritual, moral and social education. Close links to the local church, pupils’ endless curiosity, and the encouragement they receive to respect the needs of others result in good outcomes. One pupil expressed this succinctly when saying: ‘There are lots of respectful people in school, ready to do things for their friends.’

The school offers a caring and welcoming environment for pupils, which is reflected in their enjoyment of school. There are good arrangements for the care and support of pupils, particularly for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable. Learning support assistants and other staff make effective contributions to the well-being of these pupils. Pupils benefit from a good range of links to outside support agencies. Transition arrangements when pupils join and leave the school are good.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher has made a good start in making clear her high ambitions and aspirations. Morale is good, and all staff are responding enthusiastically to her leadership. There have been significant improvements in a number of areas in the last year, due to the positive support provided by leaders from another school and the local authority. The headteacher is driving increasingly rapid improvement, especially in the attainment of pupils and in teaching. This is because the management of teaching and learning has become more rigorous, and teachers know very clearly what is expected of them. The headteacher is constantly reinforcing the guidance she has given to teachers concerning the development of their teaching skills. However, the effective management of many aspects of provision relies too heavily on the headteacher, which at present limits the school’s ability to sustain the improvements recently made. The school’s self-evaluation is accurate, and the headteacher is setting challenging, although realistic, targets for improvement. The governing body has realised that it has been insufficiently proactive in the past in challenging the school’s leaders about its performance. Members of the governing body are now more directly involved, and realise the need to act decisively in setting its future direction. They are rigorous in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are firmly in place.

The school’s promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, and it has tackled potential discrimination by, for example, improving the performance of specific groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school engages well with parents and carers, who are very supportive of the school, realising it has passed through difficult times. One, whose views were typical, commented: ‘I have every faith that the new team in its entirety will evolve the school into an environment that retains nurturing in conjunction with improved academic performance.’ The school has a good range of partnerships which have contributed significantly to the recent improvements in the school’s provision and leadership and management. These include effective collaboration with the local church and Bicester Children’s University. The school’s promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. At present, although pupils contribute strongly to their own and local communities, they have fewer opportunities to widen their knowledge of different cultures and contrasting ways of life.

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	2
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

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the skills expected for their age. Children for several years have made satisfactory progress, but this is now accelerating. This is because the staff have a good knowledge of the learning and welfare needs of the children, and provide interesting and exciting activities throughout the day. This, together with a spacious and stimulating indoor and outdoor environment, is leading to improvement in children’s learning and social development. This was seen to good effect when children were learning through speech and mime how to tell a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The adults constantly observe and assess children’s development, and use the results in their planning to provide good opportunities for active and independent learning. Children also benefit from being in a mixed-age class with pupils from Year 1. This gives them good role models for their understanding of routines and expected behaviour. Children greatly enjoy their learning, are always smiling and talk

confidently about their activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, but improving because of the impact of experienced and knowledgeable leaders. The school recognises that good practice must become fully embedded across all aspects of learning and development if outcomes for children are to be consistently good or better. Safeguarding of children is robust, and adults engage well on a daily basis with parents and carers. The school has established an effective partnership with a toddlers group, which helps children to settle in quickly.

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	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Just under half of the parents and carers returned questionnaires, which is above the average response for primary schools. Almost all parents and carers have very positive views of the school, particularly regarding the safety of their children and how much they enjoy school, and the school’s leadership and management. A typical comment is: ‘There is a positive atmosphere and energy within the school community, and communications about my child’s progress and achievements have been excellent.’

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Finmere 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 33 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	75	4	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	75	4	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	6	38	8	50	1	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	25	10	63	1	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	25	11	69	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	5	31	10	63	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	19	11	69	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)	5	31	10	63	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	5	31	11	69	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	63	4	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	31	11	69	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	50	8	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	9	56	7	44	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



22 October 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Finmere Church of England Primary School, Finmere,
Buckingham MK18 4AR**

Many thanks to you all for making me so welcome when I recently visited your school. It was a real pleasure to find that so many of you wanted to talk to me, and it was good to know how much you enjoy school and your trips, especially to the chocolate factory. I was most impressed by your excellent behaviour which everyone says is always the same. Also, I was very pleased to see how many of you take responsibilities, especially in the hall at lunchtimes. You go to a satisfactory school, where you lead healthy lives, are kept very safe and are well cared for, and join in many activities at church and in the village. By the time you leave school, your attainment is about what it should be in English and mathematics, and has improved. There have been many changes in staff in the last few years, and I think your new headteacher and teachers have settled in well, with your help. I know you are looking forward to working with your new partner school.

I have suggested ways in which I think your school can improve still further. You need to be able to reach your challenging targets more often, especially those of you who can cope with really hard work. I have asked that your teachers make sure you know what you have to do to improve your work. I have also asked the school to make sure that you learn to judge your own and other pupils' work, and to encourage you to tell your teachers what you think you need to do to learn better. I would like all your teachers to challenge you all of the time, and to keep you on your toes. I have also asked the school to make sure that more of the adults can help your new headteacher by taking on some of the important tasks in running the school. I am certain that, with your cheerful help, the school will improve even more.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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