



Kintbury St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 109967
Local Authority West Berkshire
Inspection number 278325
Inspection date 8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Gainsborough Avenue
School category	Voluntary controlled		Kintbury
Age range of pupils	4-11		Hungerford RG17 9XN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01488 658336
Number on roll (school)	93	Fax number	01488 657455
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs A Warren
		Headteacher	Mrs B A O'Dwyer
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector for one day.

Description of the school

Kintbury is a small village school situated between Hungerford and Newbury. There are four mixed-age classes. Most pupils are of White British heritage whose home circumstances are generally more advantaged than those of pupils in most other schools. About a quarter of all pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. This proportion is above average. A few pupils are in the early stages of learning to communicate in English. The headteacher is moving to a new headship at the end of the current term.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Kintbury is a good school. Over the past eight years it has been transformed from having serious weaknesses to its present position of strength. It has a number of outstanding features. These include the exceptional quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils, the excellent curriculum and the outstanding quality of pupils' personal development. To a large extent the transformation has been brought about by the dynamism and determination of the headteacher.

Almost all parents are appreciative of the good quality of education provided for their children. One summarised the views of many when writing, 'I feel that my child is respected, well taught, and well cared for by a dedicated and hard-working staff.' One of the most noteworthy features of this school is the high quality of its systems for assessing the needs of all pupils and checking on the progress that they make. As a result, teachers know their pupils very well. They use this knowledge to plan interesting and exciting activities, and consequently pupils are always keen to learn. Teachers' understanding of pupils' needs helps them to pitch work at the right level of difficulty and provide achievable challenges for all.

Throughout the school, all pupils are warmly welcomed and equally valued. Children are given a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. Their attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year, but is typically about average. The children settle in really well and rapidly gain confidence. This is because of the very good liaison between the school and the pre-school provision, which takes place on the school premises for two afternoons per week.

The significant year-on-year fluctuation in the attainment of year groups seen in this school is regularly found in small schools. It occurs because small variations in the performance of each individual can have a disproportionate effect on the standards overall. For this reason, the performance of individual year groups needs to be treated with some caution. However, when the results of national tests over the past few years are taken as a whole, standards in Year 2 are generally average in reading and mathematics, but a little below average in writing. This performance reflects the generally lower than average attainment on entry of these year groups. In Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Given their starting point, this profile of performance shows that pupils achieve well and make good progress between Reception and Year 6. This good progress occurs because the quality of teaching and learning is good.

The headteacher ensures that this is not a school which rests on its laurels, but is always looking for ways to make things even better for its pupils. These are very clearly set out in a school improvement plan. For example, the school rightly recognises that it needs to continue to improve the standards of pupils' writing by ensuring that the progress already made is fully consolidated and refined, and results in more consistently good work. The school's initiative to create a learning culture has been successful and pupils are now clearly involved in their learning through, for example, their individual targets for improvement. However, these systems are not yet fully embedded. Older

pupils do not respond consistently well to the thorough marking of their work by acting on the useful comments made by their teachers and correcting their work when required.

The leadership of the school is good. Within this, the headteacher gives excellent leadership. The highly committed staff team and the governing body give her good support. Together, they have developed an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and good systems to help ensure that this happens. The school is, therefore, well placed to make further progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the work recently done to develop pupils' skills in writing.
- Ensure that pupils respond to the marking of their work and use corrections as a tool for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

On entry to the Reception year group, children's social and communication skills are often the weak elements of their attainment on entry. They make good progress overall, but very good progress in becoming more independent learners and in developing their speaking and listening skills.

In all classes, pupils make good progress because, from an early age, information from the regular checks on their progress is used to provide specific help whenever it is needed. In the older classes in particular, pupils are given good opportunities to develop the basic skills learned in a variety of other subjects. For instance, all pupils in Years 5 and 6 were asked to calculate differences in temperature during a science lesson. The more able pupils were also challenged to devise a formula for converting degrees Celsius into degrees Fahrenheit.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make the same good progress as their classmates because they are fully included in all activities and they benefit from the same high quality use of assessment as their peers.

The year-on-year fluctuations in the attainment of all year groups are clearly illustrated by the current Years 5 and 6. While the oldest pupils are unlikely to match the average performance of the previous Year 6 group, those in Year 5 are on course to attain above average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. A very clear moral code is evident throughout the school and pupils develop good social skills

through, for example, membership of the school council. They clearly understand how to keep safe and are considerate of one another.

The reasons for the school's Gold Healthy School award are evident in the pupils' exceptionally good understanding about sensible eating habits and how to keep healthy.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their above average attendance rates illustrate this. Pupils value the very good relationships they enjoy within the school community. One pupil in Year 4 commented, 'I like school. I like it best when the teachers are happy, because then we're happy too!' Pupils get on very well with one another. Incidents of bullying are infrequent, but when they do occur they are quickly and sensitively dealt with.

All pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next phase of their education and for a future as life-long learners through their excellent social skills and their ability to apply their basic skills to help them learn in a variety of situations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school teachers are good at managing their pupils. Lesson planning is thorough. This ensures that work is well matched to the needs of all pupils within the mixed-age classes. The work is pitched at the right level, because the teachers make good use of the high quality information gained from their monitoring of pupils' achievements. All of the pupils interviewed felt that the work they are given really makes them think. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards, and this helps pupils develop speaking and listening skills through group discussion and questioning. These skills contribute to the development of their writing.

Teachers are also generally good at sustaining a crisp pace to their teaching. This helps to sustain good levels of concentration among pupils. Where the pace of learning sometimes flags a few pupils can become restless and inattentive.

Teaching assistants are used well and work in close partnership with teachers. They give good quality help to individuals or small groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is very well planned to ensure a balanced coverage of subjects. The wide range of after-school activities is a good feature, as is the recent addition of French tuition for all year groups. In addition, the school ensures that visits to places of interest or visitors to the school add further interest and enjoyment to pupils' learning. Examples of this enrichment are the 'rain forest experience' provided for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and the visit to the school by African drummers. The school's initiative to develop pupils' skills in writing is effective. Pupils benefit from well

structured opportunities to write in different ways and for different purposes, and are able to practise their skills when working in other subjects. The impact of the school's provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is seen in pupils' outstanding personal and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of pastoral care is excellent. This is because each pupil's individual needs are well known and everyone is treated and respected as an individual. The school is good at providing a healthy environment for its pupils. For example, the meals provided at lunchtime appear to be both delicious and nutritious. All pupils interviewed at lunch said that they really enjoyed all their meals and liked the choices that they could make.

There are rigorous systems for assessing pupils' academic performance. All pupils have targets to provide personal challenges for improvement. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' individual targets for both literacy and numeracy are well set out and give them a very clear understanding of what they need to do next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The impact of leadership is seen in the good progress made by the pupils. The headteacher knows the school very well and makes very good use of information gathered from her regular monitoring to guide its development. She has ensured that the curriculum contains a wide variety of activities so that all pupils can find something in which they can be successful. The school's evaluations of the impact of its work are thorough and accurate, and used well to set challenging targets. The systems put in place by the headteacher provide a good basis for continued improvement once a new headteacher is appointed.

Governance is good. Governors carefully monitor the work of the school and are good at holding it to account.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for being so helpful when I came to visit your school. I really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at all your work.

I think that you go to a good school, and this is why:

- you behave well and get on well with each other
- you make good progress because you are taught well
- your teachers are really good at checking closely on how well you are getting on, and these checks help them to give you work that makes you think;
- there are lots of extra things for you to do, such as the after-school clubs or trips that help to make learning more interesting
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are safe and are well looked after
- your headteacher, the staff and the governors are doing a really good job.

Even in a good school like yours there is always something that could be even better. So, I think that what needs to be done next is for your teachers to carry on with the good work they are already doing to help make you better writers. I also think that you could help make your own work even better by paying more attention to the useful things that the teachers have to say about what you have done. I would particularly like all of you older pupils to become better at doing your corrections.

With best wishes for your future success,

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector