



St Nicholas Church of England Primary, Hurst

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109972
Local Authority Wokingham District Council
Inspection number 278327
Inspection date 13 November 2006
Reporting inspector Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Hurst
Age range of pupils	4-11		Reading RG10 0DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0118 9340727
Number on roll (school)	125	Fax number	0118 9320736
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Martin Kearsley
		Headteacher	Mrs Christine Hyatt
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village primary school in Hurst which is a socially advantaged area. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A higher proportion of pupils at the school have statements of special educational need than the rate found in schools nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Nicholas is an effective school. Good teaching and a rich curriculum mean that pupils work hard, achieve well, enjoy school and attend extremely regularly. The committed staff are rightly proud of these achievements, as are pupils, who comment that one of the things they like most about the school is that, 'Everyone knows everyone and everyone is nice.' Staff work successfully to ensure that respect and understanding is nurtured during the pupils' time at the school. This begins early on so that even the youngest children are given some responsibility for managing their own behaviour and helping to understand the behaviour of others. One successful example is in the youngest class where pupils are encouraged to ring a bell if they feel that the class is getting too excited or noisy. Staff have an effective system of rewards for good behaviour and effort and spend considerable time ensuring that pupils develop the empathy and social skills that help them to be kind and helpful to others in the school community. This means that although a few pupils find behaving well much more difficult, their needs are handled sensitively by both staff and other pupils.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are at least average overall although in each year group, there are a small number of pupils whose skills are at a much earlier stage. Children make good progress in their time in Reception, even though some spend only a term there. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress as a result of the good teaching and individual support they receive and the well matched activities that the teachers plan for them. This means that most pupils reach standards which are above average and often well above average by the time they leave the school. Pupils who join the school with learning difficulties also make good progress in relation to their starting points and achievement is good overall. Although teachers maintain records of the progress of pupils in their own classes, until recently, the school did not have a system in place to track effectively the progress of pupils over time. A system is now in place, but it has not yet been used to analyse and improve particular aspects of the education the school provides, for example to ensure that all pupils make good progress leading up to national tests. This means that the school's monitoring and evaluation is not as effective as it could be in helping the school to make further improvements and is the reason why the inspector judges leadership and management of the school to be satisfactory overall.

Whilst most parents support the school and appreciate the education and personal development it provides, a small minority of parents do not feel that their views are sufficiently taken into account. Although the school is beginning to sample parents' opinions more systematically and tell them about the results, this work is still at early stages. However, the continuing good quality of education which the school provides confirms its satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress over time to improve the effectiveness of the school's self evaluation and forward planning
- Involve all parents in regularly identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Throughout the Foundation Stage and the school, pupils make good progress from their starting points. As a result, standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 are above average and often exceptionally high. Whilst the most recent results have dipped slightly, they are still above average. Achievement is good overall and there are no significant differences between the progress which different groups of pupils make or in different subjects. The school has identified a need to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well in writing, and to use information about progress more effectively to ensure that every pupil makes good or better progress towards individually challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are good. Pupils develop a good understanding of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle through eating and drinking healthily and through the many opportunities for regular exercise which the school provides. Pupils behave well in lessons and at mealtimes and playtimes are sociable occasions. Although some incidents of poorer behaviour occur, pupils demonstrate responsible attitudes in their dealings with others. This means that they feel safe at school, are understanding of the behaviour of others and are confident in their abilities to deal with risks and potential hazards. Pupils listen well to other pupils whilst expressing their own views with confidence. Members of the active school council take their roles as class representatives very seriously, meet regularly and contribute well to the life of the school. For example, they provide a regular newsletter for other pupils and have developed the system for gathering pupils' concerns or opinions. They are consulted and kept closely involved in projects to improve the school environment, although they do not as yet manage their own budget. Pupils' good basic skills combined with the school's effective emphasis on developing each pupil's personal qualities mean that they are well prepared for their secondary education and look forward to their future education with confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils enjoy learning and do well in their lessons. The school has been successful in developing pupils' confidence in assessing for themselves how well they have achieved in particular lessons. For example, in one lesson observed during the inspection, pupils read each other's work and then nominated their partner if they felt they had been particularly successful in

continuing a story in the style of the author. Such opportunities for self and peer assessment help teachers identify where they might need to provide extra help or challenge for particular pupils. Teachers are well supported by other adults, who work well with pupils with difficulties to ensure that they can take part in lessons and achieve well in relation to their starting points. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to stimulate pupils. One successful example observed involved projecting video clips to give pupils more insight into the conditions in tropical rain forests, before they went on to identify why such forests may be important. Opportunities for pupils to use this technology are limited.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum is interesting and varied. Pupils benefit from lessons in music, drama, dance and art which are led by staff with particular skills or expertise in these areas. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn French and Spanish in Years 3 to 6. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has successfully improved the opportunities which pupils have to develop and apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills through investment in new equipment and training. The school also provides a wide range of writing opportunities to ensure that both boys and girls enjoy writing and make good progress in this subject. The school has identified the planning of how subjects are linked together as an area where it could improve further. The school makes good use of its strong links with the local church and community to provide a range of extra visits, visitors and clubs which pupils enjoy and learn from.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This inclusive school pays good attention to the individual needs of its pupils and as a result, provides good care, guidance and support enabling them to do well. Procedures to protect pupils are comprehensive. The school works well with a range of specialist agencies to identify and meet the needs of pupils with particular learning difficulties or disabilities and to support learners who are more vulnerable. In this supportive environment, pupils are aware of and generally meet targets which are individually challenging. However, the more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress over time is an area which the school has identified will further improve the academic guidance it provides.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the school is well focused on promoting learning and the personal development and well-being of learners. This can be seen in its strong commitment to ensuring that no learners are disadvantaged, in its careful attention to meeting the needs of individual pupils and in the stimulating and interesting opportunities it

provides for its pupils. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate but the school has recognised that it needs to make much better use of information about pupils' progress over time to maintain and further improve pupils' achievement. Although the committed governors make a good contribution to many aspects of school life, they have recognised that they do not yet use information from a wide enough range of sources to evaluate improvements. For example, until recently, parents' views of the strengths and weaknesses of the school were not sampled regularly. This means that whilst the school keeps parents well informed, a small minority feel that their views are not sufficiently taken into 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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	3
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	3
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	3
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

It was lovely to meet you recently and to share in some of the things you were doing. During the day I spent with you, I learnt things I didn't know about lighthouses and tropical rain forests, so I can see why you are keen to come to school each day so as not to miss out on anything. Learning new things in interesting ways is one of the reasons you enjoy school and do well. One of the other things I discovered was that you all get along well and that the school helps you to understand other people's feelings and views, at the same time as you learn how to do new things or improve your skills.

I agree with your school council and your teachers that you go to a good school. All the adults at the school, as well as you and your parents, want to make it even better. Your school council takes your suggestions seriously and meets very regularly to see if they can put your ideas into practice. In the same way, your headteacher, governors and staff meet regularly to see what they can improve. There are two things which I have asked them to do to help. Firstly, to keep a closer eye on how you make progress as you go through the school from Reception to Year 6. Secondly, I have asked them to find out what your parents think more regularly, as they did when they sent the parents' survey out in June. Your school gives your parents lots of information, but because it hasn't regularly asked their opinions and told them the results, a few of them feel that the school doesn't take enough account of their views and suggestions. Knowing what your parents think will help the school make sure that they are all as happy with the school as you are.

Thank you again for making me so welcome. I was just sorry I couldn't stay long enough to see whether Class 4's lighthouse models would really light up and whether purple is a good colour choice for the new toilet doors.

With best wishes for the future,

Nicola Davies

Lead inspector