



Whaddon CofE First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110415
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278428
Inspection dates 26 September 2005 to 27 September 2005
Reporting inspector Christopher Parker AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Stock Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Whaddon
Age range of pupils	4 to 8		Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK17 0LS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01908501719
Number on roll	38	Fax number	01908526851
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs J Rotherham
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs D Travis

Age group 4 to 8	Inspection dates 26 September 2005 - 27 September 2005	Inspection number 278428
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Description of the school

Whaddon Church of England First is a very small village school with 38 pupils on roll. They are taught in two classes. Last year there were three classes in the mornings. About a third of the pupils come from the village, the rest from further a field. The number of pupils ebbs and flows as new houses and then new schools are built in nearby Milton Keynes. In addition many pupils leave the school at the end of Year 2 to take up places in junior schools, leaving just a few in Year 3. The pupils come from comparatively advantaged homes. Attainment on entry is average and above. The children are well prepared for school because most have attended pre-school education. The school has not been able to make a permanent appointment of a headteacher for more than twelve months because there have been no applicants for the job. A second acting headteacher joined the school in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory and the inspector agrees. The school has maintained good standards and in 2005 improved the results in national tests. A large proportion of the pupils attained high levels, notably in mathematics. However, in lessons progress is inconsistent because the assessment of what the pupils already know and are able to do is not effective in providing a precise picture of what they need to learn next. The school has started to set individual targets for the pupils but this is not yet effective in generating rapid progress in all lessons. The pupils behave very well. They enjoy school and are ready, willing and able to learn. On occasions this is not capitalised upon because they are not always set challenging tasks. Nevertheless, in many lessons the pupils do well because they respond positively and work together without any disruption. The school reports that most of the children leave the reception class after reaching the goals set for them. Whilst the curriculum for the youngest children meets requirements it is not as active and exciting as it should be. Parents hold the school in high regard and are very appreciative of the care their children are shown and the happy atmosphere the school generates. A few parents raised the question of whether more could be demanded of some pupils. Although the school is judged in less glowing terms than at the last inspection it has achieved good test results and made recent improvements in important areas. Under the leadership of the acting headteacher the school has the capacity to continue to improve. Currently the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on: * improving marking, assessment and target setting to accelerate the progress all pupils make in lessons. * ensuring the youngest children receive a stimulating and exciting curriculum that meets their needs

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The results of national tests at the end of Year 2 are consistently above average. In the most recent tests the pupils achieved very well exceeding the results attained by many schools. Standards in writing improved considerably and in mathematics two-thirds of pupils reached the higher levels. Results far exceed the school's targets. This highlights weaknesses in the tracking of the pupils' progress and target setting. The improved results were achieved by a combination of secure class teaching with well-focussed additional support for Year 2 pupils. In the reception and Year 1 class the pupils make adequate progress. However, the youngest children do not experience the exciting range of opportunities they need to make rapid progress. In some year groups boys do better than girls and in others it is reversed. This is due to variations in cohorts rather than the teaching. The school has recently improved its stock of non-fiction books for boys to encourage them to higher standards in reading. This was successful in improving results in reading last year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. This was well illustrated in an assembly where the special gifts and talents of each child were celebrated. The acting headteacher involved pupils in identifying the talents of others. One boy chose another who had helped him with his work because he had, 'really enjoyed working with him.' High standards of behaviour are expected and they are the norm. The pupils are very willing and ready to learn. For the most part they enjoy their learning but a few become fidgety and a little impatient when they are asked to sit on the carpet for too long for the first part of some lessons. Attendance is good and pupils, often accompanied by their parents, are at school in plenty of time to start lessons. The pupils are taught to work and play safely. At playtimes they are encouraged to eat fruit. Games lessons and after school clubs also contribute to the pupils' developing healthy lifestyles. The school is an important part of the community and has strong links with the Church. For Christingle and May Day the school and community come together for events that are particularly important in the community calendar. The pupils are beginning to learn skills that will serve them in later life, for example, in numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching is satisfactory. In the last year the teachers have responded positively to many changes. As a result they now make clear to the pupils what it is they want them to learn. In Years 2 and 3 this has resulted in lessons that successfully help the pupils to learn new knowledge and skills at a pace that is expected for pupils of this age. However, there are occasions when the work for some groups is not accurately matched to their needs. At other times, for example, in French all of the pupils are consistently challenged. In reception and Year 1 the introduction to some lessons is too long and the momentum for rapid learning is lost. When lessons begin briskly and move quickly into interesting tasks the pupils do well. This was the case when the pupils wrote their own versions of, 'We're going on a Bear Hunt.' The teacher creates a safe and caring environment for the youngest children but some tasks do little to excite them. When the teaching assistant works independently with this group they respond well to her lively questioning and enjoy learning. The marking of the pupils' work is satisfactory but it is not precise enough to help them to improve. The last few minutes of each lesson is set aside to assess the extent of the pupils' learning but not enough is gained from this to identify the next step in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory but the activities planned for the youngest children, whilst covering all areas of learning, do not give them enough opportunities to find out for themselves through imaginative or creative play. The school is planning to create an outdoor area to extend the opportunities it can offer the children in the reception class. Currently the curriculum offered to these children is too tightly aligned to the needs of the older pupils in the class. In Years 2 and 3 the pupils begin to learn to speak French. This is a valuable addition to a curriculum that is planned to ensure all subjects are taught. The pupils are being taught the skills for using ICT but they have too few opportunities to extend these skills through learning in other subjects. The school has, over the last twelve months, introduced a wider range of extra curricular activities. The pupils now have opportunities to attend after school clubs in multi-sports, drama and music. Spanish is soon to be introduced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Many parents commented very positively about the quality of, 'care for all pupils.' The inspector agrees that the teachers and their assistants create a warm, friendly and secure atmosphere for the pupils. The supervision at playtimes and lunchtimes is good. Adults on duty station themselves so they can see all of the pupils to ensure they play safely. Health and safety checks have identified damp in the older part of the school and for the well being of the pupils it is no longer used as a classroom. The tracking of the pupils' progress relies on a rather disparate range of activities. Currently, the information is not gathered in a sufficiently coherent manner to provide a clear picture of each pupil's progress or a sharp focus for planning the next stage of learning. Consequently the setting of goals and targets for each child is not working as effectively as it should to promote rapid progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has only been in post for a few weeks. Nevertheless, she has quickly and accurately assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school. By monitoring the quality of teaching and making good use of the records of previous lesson observations she has very quickly gained an insight into the school. This has allowed her to identify, and begin to concentrate her efforts, on a few key areas for improvement. Some parents expressed concerns about the difficulties in recruiting a permanent headteacher. Using the funds saved over a number of years the governors have been able to secure the services of acting headteachers. By allowing them to spend most of their time managing the school the governors have taken advantage of their experience. As a result, improvements have been made in many areas. The new acting headteacher brings considerable knowledge of school improvement and spells out, very clearly, how she

sees improvements being achieved. Currently, the role of subject leader is not well developed. Historically the staff team has worked together to manage the curriculum. The acting headteacher is seeking to expand the role of subject leaders to play a greater part in improvement activities. Teachers are currently involved in training to this end. Governors strongly support the school and are seeking to be more effective in holding it accountable. Until recently, they acknowledge, the governing body played a very limited role in the strategic management of the school. This has changed and governors now increasingly monitor some of the opportunities provided for the pupils. Further training for governors is imminent.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

This letter is to tell you about the inspection of your school and to thank you for talking to me about your work. You are doing quite well in lessons but I agree with your teachers that, with some improvements, you could learn more. You behave very well in the classroom and when you are playing in the playground or the field. You listen to your teachers carefully and are very willing to work hard. You like what you do and enjoy school.

The teachers and the teaching assistants look after you very well. The school is a very caring place and everybody is very friendly.

I have asked the teachers to think of better ways to mark your work and check what you have learned. This will allow them to help you to move on to what you need to learn next. I have also asked the teachers to think of ways of giving the children in the reception class really interesting and fun things to do so they can find out more for themselves.