

Quainton Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110447
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	278435
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	160
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lyn Martin
Headteacher	Mrs Denise McClellan (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2000
School address	Lower Street Quainton Aylesbury HP22 4BJ
Telephone number	01296 655242
Fax number	01296 655415

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school serving a generally advantaged area. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, although it is higher in some year groups. The school is being managed by an interim headteacher until the substantive position is filled. There has been a high turnover of staff and changes to the leadership of the school in recent years. Substantial building work is about to take place to improve the school site and add extra teaching areas.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school which provides a satisfactory education. Despite staff changes and the lack of permanent leadership, the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have kept the school on an even keel. They work well with the staff and have improved morale. Many parents share this view, as one rightly commented, 'I have been very happy with the school since the headteacher's arrival. She has been a strong and communicative leader. The school as a whole seems more cohesive and focussed'. The pupils' personal development is good and the school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for them. The vast majority are well behaved and enjoy school, although, at times, a small number do not behave so well. A few parents share this view. However, parents agree that the school deals with any misbehaviour very well and recognise that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils look forward to the many opportunities they have to work with the local community. They develop good attitudes and understand how to live healthily when participating in the many extra activities and sports the school provides.

Children in the Foundation Stage make a satisfactory start and reach the standards expected for their age by the time they start Year 1. Teachers and support staff do well to help the children develop early literacy and number skills, although children of higher ability could do better in mathematics.

Standards are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. English standards are above average by the end of Year 6. National tests results show that the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in English is greater than in mathematics and science. Pupils lack the necessary skills and confidence to apply their number skills to problem-solving in mathematics. Reading standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and writing standards are average. Pupils get good opportunities to practise their reading and writing, although there is still more to do to improve the accuracy of pupils' writing, particularly spelling, by the end of Year 2.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is enough good teaching to accelerate the progress of pupils who fall behind. Assessment is used to help teachers track the performance of pupils but this is not consistent enough to ensure that all higher ability pupils reach their targets in mathematics and science.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The interim headteacher provides strong leadership and is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Governors provide good support and are a real asset. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The staff have responded well to the guidance of the leadership team and are improving their teaching skills and knowledge of assessment. Improvements to English standards, staff training and more challenging targets for all pupils, point towards a renewed confidence by pupils and staff. The leadership team and governors have made accurate evaluations of the school's effectiveness. They have identified appropriate priorities based on a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching so that it has a greater impact on pupils' skills in mathematics and science to raise standards.

- Improve the accuracy of pupils' independent writing and spelling to raise standards in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Ensure that teachers use assessment better to help them plan work that is more closely matched to the needs of higher ability pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. The majority of children join the Reception year with levels of knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with those expected of four-year-olds. By the time they start Year 1, the children reach the standards expected in all areas of learning. Pupils make good progress in reading in Years 1 and 2 to reach standards that are above average. Standards are average in writing and mathematics because fewer pupils reach higher levels compared with reading. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English and average in mathematics and science. National test results show that pupils in Years 6 perform better in English because the proportion reaching higher levels is usually greater than in mathematics and science. English standards are improving, although writing standards should be higher by the end of Year 2. Pupils' spelling skills in Years 1 and 2 are not being developed adequately. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils enjoy school which is reflected in good attendance rates. They are well behaved and considerate of each other's needs. A few behave less well at times but the staff apply consistent methods that improves their behaviour. Pupils feel valued and appreciated, as one commented, 'I like this school because there is a lot to do and everyone helps you'. Older pupils are given responsibilities that develop their knowledge of safety when acting as road safety officers. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and the importance of exercise, as one said, 'We need to eat a little bit of everything for a balanced diet'. Many demonstrate maturity beyond their years when representing the views of others as school councillors. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community, although they do not have regular experience or knowledge of different cultures represented in Britain today. Those who attain expected standards in their English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well equipped for their future economic well being, but not all pupils reach these standards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Reception children learn about the world and themselves because staff monitor their progress diligently and use good methods to improve their early literacy skills. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build on these foundations well, although many lack the confidence to write independently because they are not learning to spell accurately. There is

consistently good teaching in parts of the school, particularly in Year 6, which is accelerating pupils' progress and raising standards. However, teachers are not providing enough tasks for pupils of higher ability to apply their number skills to problem solving in mathematics lessons. Teachers manage behaviour well so there is a positive learning climate in all classes. The objectives of lessons are clear and teachers use consistent systems to mark pupils' work. Teachers regularly assess pupils' performance. However, assessment is not being used to ensure that tasks in lessons are matched closely enough to the needs of higher ability pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's satisfactory curriculum offers a balanced range of activities. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which are having a positive effect on the pupils' personal and social development as well as their understanding of healthy living. There is a satisfactory range of indoor and outdoor activities in the Foundation Stage following improvements to outdoor areas and resources. In every class there is a good range of educational visits and visitors that add stimulation to pupils' studies. Improvements to ICT resources offer greater breadth and teachers increasingly plan topics that incorporate the use of computers to broaden pupils' learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to research and write accounts that draw in different subjects, such as art, history and geography, for example, during specially themed weeks. However, pupils of higher ability are not always provided with sufficient opportunities to extend their skills in science or to investigate problems in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is satisfactory overall. The school promotes a strong ethos of personal care. There are good arrangements in place to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. There are consistent and well-managed arrangements in place that safeguard pupils, including effective child protection procedures. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are managed and cared for sensitively and effectively. Individual targets in pupils' workbooks help the pupils to work towards the next steps in the learning. Assessment procedures are developing, but are not being used with precision or consistency so that some pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The interim headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have provided a shared vision which is increasingly taking account of the views of parents and pupils. Staff changes have hampered the progress made by the school. Staffing has now stabilised so that, following a period where they fluctuated, standards are recovering and improving. Consequently, there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The staff have done well to improve English standards but, until now, there has not been enough focus on improving standards in mathematics and science. Priorities in the school development plan have been radically changed and sharpened so that underachievement by groups and individuals is reducing significantly. The headteacher works closely with governors so there is focused and systematic monitoring of the pupils' performance and of the teaching. Governors provide good support to both pupils and staff. Together with the headteacher, their robust

evaluations of the school have provided an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness and the teaching.

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Annex A

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	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	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	3

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

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	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

23 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Quainton Church of England Combined School, Aylesbury, HP22 4BJ

Thank you very much for welcoming the inspectors to your school. You were all very friendly and helpful.

Your school provides a satisfactory education and there are some good things that are helping it to improve. These are the things that pleased inspectors most.

- You are well behaved and help each other in lessons and at break-times. We were pleased to see that all pupils are trying very hard to behave well.
- You come to school regularly and on time.
- Your teachers are helping you to do well in reading.
- Your parents are pleased that the headteacher and staff are making improvements to the school quickly.
- The governors look after the school well and have made sure that they visit regularly to check that everything is alright.

I have asked your teachers to:

- help you all improve your mathematics and science work so you can all reach higher standards
- help pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 improve their spelling and writing
- make sure that in all lessons the work you get is just right for all of you to help you all reach your targets and reach higher standards.

I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely,

Charalambos Loizou Lead Inspector