



Oakley Church of England Combined School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110448
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278436
Inspection dates 26 September 2005 to 27 September 2005
Reporting inspector Barbara Atcheson AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Worminghall Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Oakley
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Aylesbury HP18 9QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01844 238364
Number on roll	99	Fax number	01844 238364
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Susan Anderson-Lewis
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Miss Joanne Garlick

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one inspector over a period of two days.

Description of the school

Oakley Church of England Combined School is a rural school. Most of the 99 pupils live in Oakley and Boarstall. Oakley is an area of considerable social and economic advantage. It is a settled community of mainly professional people and farmers with 12% of the pupils from traveller families. No pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below the national average. The small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds have good English. Most pupils have had pre-school experience. A new headteacher took up post three weeks before the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school's judgement that its effectiveness is satisfactory is over generous. Whilst the school does have good aspects there has been a steady decline in standards and too many pupils are not achieving as well as they should. The school has declined since the last inspection. National test results show that by the end of Year 6 in 2004, the performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science was below the national average. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are secure. The pupils' personal development is good. Good quality provision ensures that children in the reception class flourish, so that by the end of their reception year, most have exceeded the learning goals expected at this age. Under the resolute leadership of the new headteacher, the school has rapidly started to identify its own weaknesses and strengths. The school's self evaluation document is honest and, for the most part, sharply evaluative. Acting upon shortcomings identified in the new headteacher's initial audit, the staff and governors have, in a short space of time, demonstrated a strong whole school commitment to improve and have begun to address with enthusiasm and determination the long standing inadequacies surrounding pupils' achievement. There are promising signs that the pace and demand of teaching are starting to improve and that the school has reasonable capacity to improve. However, on the basis of recent past performance it currently offers unsatisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the pupils' standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. The school's judgement that its effectiveness is satisfactory is over generous. Whilst the school does have good aspects there has been a steady decline in standards and too many pupils are not achieving as well as they should. The school has declined since the last inspection. National test results show that by the end of Year 6 in 2004, the performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science was below the national average. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are secure. The pupils' personal development is good. Good quality provision ensures that children in the reception class flourish, so that by the end of their reception year, most have exceeded the learning goals expected at this age. Under the resolute leadership of the new headteacher, the school has rapidly started to identify its own weaknesses and strengths. The school's self evaluation document is honest and, for the most part, sharply evaluative. Acting upon shortcomings identified in the new headteacher's initial audit, the staff and governors have, in a short space of time, demonstrated a strong whole school commitment to improve and have begun to address with enthusiasm and determination the long standing inadequacies surrounding pupils' achievement. There are promising signs that the pace and demand of teaching are starting to improve and that the school has reasonable capacity to improve. However, on the basis of recent past performance it currently offers unsatisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13(3) of the

Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the pupils' standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

* Raise standards in English, particularly writing, mathematics and science * Improve and implement a pupil tracking system and target setting process that will inform and support the raising of standards* Develop the role of subject leaders to include opportunities to monitor and evaluate standards in the core subjects

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school correctly identifies that, taken overall, the achievement of its pupils is inadequate. The majority of children start school with above average standards in most areas of learning. A secure atmosphere together with a well structured teaching programme ensures that by the end of their reception year most have exceeded the learning goals expected at this age. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils continue to achieve soundly. The national test results for seven-year-olds are generally at least above the national average. Over the past two years the trend in reading and mathematics at level 2 has been rising although writing dipped in 2004. However, the pupils in Years 3-6 do not make enough progress. Analysis of their results in national tests has been stubbornly below the national average for several years in English, mathematics and science and is worse than the performance of pupils in similar schools. In particular, too few of the more able children manage to achieve the higher test scores of which they are capable. There has been a legacy of pupils not meeting their targets. Although in 2005 the target for overall English was met, that for writing was not. Inspection evidence shows that following improvements to the use of assessment information the rate of pupil progress is starting to accelerate. The new headteacher has already taken steps to remedy this situation. Teachers have now been given an analysis of test results and they are already realizing the need to check how well pupils are doing throughout the year and to alter their planned programme of learning so that all pupils can achieve their maximum potential. Although very early in the school year, this is already beginning to show in the progress that pupils are now making in lessons. The traveller pupils are well catered for and are making satisfactory progress from a low starting point.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in classes and around the school are good. Pupils like school, enjoy their lessons and are polite. Attendance is very good. Pupils' relationships with each other and staff are extremely good, reflecting the strong emphasis which

the school places on their personal development. Pupils play happily together and say that instances of bullying or aggressive behaviour are very rare. Pupils say that "It is good here because if anyone is lonely they can sit on the 'buddy bench' and the buddies come and talk to you"; Pupils are very good at using their initiative, taking on a range of responsibilities through the school council. This develops pupils' self-confidence, preparing them well for adulthood. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. Spiritual development is a strong feature of the school. Opportunities for reflection are built into assemblies and lessons. Pupils show a good understanding of their own and others' beliefs. A strong culture of respect for others permeates the school, and pupils show a very clear sense of right and wrong. They have a good understanding and respect for their own cultural traditions and those of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Taken overall the teaching is satisfactory. However, given the need to raise standards and improve the progress that pupils make, the quality of the teaching should be better than this. The analysis of last year's work in the books of pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 shows clearly that many were insufficiently challenged and that progress over the course of the year was too slow. The match between the tasks being set and the pupils' abilities was often inadequate. Marking did not tell the pupils how to improve their work. However, most of the teaching seen during the inspection was engaging and well matched to the pupils' needs. There is good evidence that pupils are now being challenged more consistently and that expectations have been raised. Pupils are taking greater pride in their work. Throughout the school relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and supportive. Pupils' behaviour is managed well. They listen attentively and concentrate hard although girls do not take such an active part in their learning as boys. Under guidance of the new headteacher, a more detailed analysis of the results of the national tests have been shared with teachers for the first time and this information utilized to inform the teachers' planning. Recent improvements in the day to day assessments carried out by the teachers is already having a positive impact on the teaching and learning of older pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The inspector shares the view of the school that recent changes to address the needs of higher achieving pupils, is a good start that is having a positive effect on the standard and quality of their work. The school provides a broad range of activities including drama, which pupils think is 'brilliant' and Spanish and French in Years 3-6. Its curriculum for the youngest children is good and ensures that children are given a secure platform for future learning. They say that 'going outside and looking at things through magnifying glasses is fun'. The curriculum for pupils

with special educational needs is good. The clear and detailed individual education plans for these pupils contribute strongly to their good progress. Attendance at the out of school club, tag rugby, cross country and netball is high. These all have a positive influence on the pupils' learning. A rich and well planned programme of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum and adds enjoyment to pupils' learning. Good provision is made to ensure that its pupils keep healthy and safe. There is an effective personal, health and social education programme which successfully promotes positive attitudes and helps pupils to understand that they belong to a community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care, guidance and support for pupils is good. Pupils are well cared for and the arrangements for child protection ensure that all adults are aware of the needs of vulnerable children. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and special measures are taken to care for any vulnerable pupils. The traveller pupils have been integrated fully into the life of the school. They are supported in class and their welfare is closely observed. All pupils know that if they need help it is always there. The school has good arrangements to support pupils starting full time education and to ease their transfer to local secondary schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The new headteacher is unswerving in her drive to halt the school's decline. Her leadership and clarity are valued by the school community. Questionnaires completed by parents indicate confidence in her and her vision for improvement. The school judges its leadership and management to be satisfactory. However, whilst acknowledging the considerable early impact and dynamism of the new headteacher, the inspector judges that the overall effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate. Although the governing body has recently signed up to some additional training they have had difficulty in recruitment and have not held the school properly to account. An early draft of a new school improvement plan has involved staff and governors fully for the first time. It is rooted in the issues derived from the headteacher's early analysis of the school's performance and provides a good illustration of an improving capacity to evaluate accurately, plan appropriate action and identify measurable outcomes. A new leadership team has been formed and training identified to give them the necessary skills to improve standards. However, previous weaknesses in the checks made to ensure that teaching is sufficiently challenging and that pupils are making enough progress have contributed significantly to the school's underperformance, especially in Years 3-6. Important activity such as the performance management of teachers has lacked the necessary rigour to improve the quality of teaching and lift standards.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	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?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	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	2	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	2	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?	2	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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	Yes
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

I should like to thank you all for being so kind, polite and helpful on my recent visit to your school. You clearly enjoy being at school and behave well in your lessons. You are very friendly towards each other and your teachers. You learn exciting things such as French and Spanish and you do a lot of drama. Your teachers care very well for you and help you to be safe and healthy. You also have a very good school council who organise interesting events. Good luck with your Pyjama Party!

There are some things that the school needs to do to improve. The pupils in Years 3-6 could learn a lot faster than they do at the moment and get better results in their tests. The teachers need to make every lesson as exciting and challenging as some of the ones I saw during the inspection. Your new headteacher, Mrs Garlick, has lots of good ideas about how to make school an even better and more exciting place to work in and your parents, the governors and staff are right behind her. In order to make sure that things get better quickly I've decided to give your school a "Notice to Improve." This means that another inspector will visit the school in a year or so to see if all the grown-ups' good ideas have been successfully carried out and helped all of you do even better in your work.

Your school is making a great effort to look at ways to make your school even better. These are some ways that will help it to improve. You must work harder in English, mathematics and science. Teachers will check how well you are doing throughout the year so that they can plan how to help you. Teachers in charge of subjects are always looking for ways to help move learning forward as much as possible and will be doing more of this in the near future. Thank you again for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you again for making me so welcome at your school.