



High Wych Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117398
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280068
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Helen Ranger LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Wych
School category	Voluntary controlled		CM21 0JB
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279 722109
Number on roll	209	Fax number	01279 600396
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Andrew Shepherd
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Mandy West

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	Inspection number 280068
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving the village of High Wych and the surrounding area. It maintains close links with the local church. While most pupils come from White British families, about 5% represent a wide range of minority ethnic groups. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. The level of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

High Wych School judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory at present and inspectors agree. It is emerging from a challenging few years. After losing several valued teachers due to factors such as their promotion, the recruitment of suitably qualified replacement staff proved difficult. As a result, standards of teaching and learning fell compared with the good practice seen previously. The school's staffing is now more stable and new teachers are helping to ensure that the quality of education is improving again. Because of the disruptions to staffing, the school is not as strong as at the time of the last inspection. However, it has made good progress on the main areas of weakness identified by its previous report. It shows a satisfactory capacity to improve. Pupils make satisfactory progress due to sound teaching. This includes those in the Foundation Stage (the Nursery and Reception classes) who settle in quickly and exceed expected standards. The standards reached by Year 2 and Year 6 are above national averages. The school has correctly identified that its most capable pupils, while achieving satisfactorily, could do even better. Boys have not done as well as girls in recent years. Action to improve these aspects of provision is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Pupils' personal development is good and has been sustained as a strong feature of the school. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision of how the school should move forward. Good plans for continuing development have been drawn up. Their success had been limited by the many staff changes but action is now having a positive impact. The school is supported satisfactorily by the governors. It continues to receive regular advice and assistance from the local education authority's advisers which has helped it through the recent unsettled period. Parents' views of the school are mainly positive, but some have understandable concerns about how their children have been affected by staff changes. Parents need to be given even more information about how the school is tackling this. In view of its current overall effectiveness, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is consistently good enough to raise standards further, especially those achieved by the most capable pupils and the boys.
- Ensure that new staff are trained to contribute effectively to the management of their areas of responsibility and to the overall improvement of the school.
- Ensure that parents are kept well-informed about any necessary changes that affect their children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils of all ages make satisfactory progress, including those with learning difficulties. From a starting point that is generally a little above average, the oldest children in the Foundation Stage exceed the levels expected nationally. By Year 2, pupils reach standards that usually exceed national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2005, they did particularly well in writing and their overall performance was significantly above the national average. The performance of the Year 6 pupils over the past four years has consistently been above average in English and science. It has been above average in mathematics in three of the four years. The school sets challenging targets for its pupils but these were not quite met last year. Inspection findings confirm that the current pupils continue to reach above average standards in their work. The school's careful analyses of its results have shown that boys do not do as well as girls and that the higher attaining pupils could be stretched further. Inspectors agree that these are areas for development. At the time of the last inspection, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) needed to be improved. This has been addressed well and pupils reach standards that are higher than the levels expected by the National Curriculum. The inspection did not cover the full range of subjects, but inspectors particularly noted the high quality of art work and music.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, and effective in creating a friendly school. Attendance is above average. Good behaviour and an enthusiasm for learning help pupils enjoy school. They are polite and treat each other respectfully. A few parents feel that some pupils do not behave well, but there was no evidence of this during the inspection. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem and they know what to do should it occur. They know they are treated fairly and that adults will help them if they have any worries. They say 'Everyone is friendly and lessons are fun'. They make a very good contribution to the community through fund-raising activities. For example, they complete application forms giving reasons for holding charity events and, if approved by the headteacher, they arrange these themselves. Pupils know how to lead safe and healthy lives. They choose healthy meals at lunchtime and make sure that the tuck shop that they run includes healthy snacks. There are good opportunities for exercise and sport. For example, Year 6 pupils look forward to taking part in the annual triathlon. They know their views are taken seriously because, when the school council asked for more playground activities, they were provided. The emphasis on literacy, numeracy and particularly on computer skills provides a secure basis for their future economic well-being. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils gain much from the well-developed links with the local church and they respect the beliefs and customs of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. The school acknowledges that the quality of teaching was too variable during the period when it had recruitment difficulties and learning in some classes was disrupted. All the lessons seen during the

inspection, however, were judged to be satisfactory or good. Where pupils do well, tasks are closely matched to the needs of the full range of abilities, time is used well and teaching assistants support pupils effectively. For example, higher attainers in Year 6 learned to develop their thinking skills, led by a talented teaching assistant. Generally, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, relationships are good and there is a pleasant and positive atmosphere for learning. In the few less effective lessons, tasks lack depth or are less imaginative. Teachers are not as clear about what pupils are expected to learn and spend too long talking to the class. As a result, pupils sometimes become restless because they spend too long sitting and listening. In the Foundation Stage at times, children wander from activity to activity because there is not always enough guidance on what they are expected to do. Improved assessment procedures mean that teachers know how pupils are getting on in all subjects. They use this information to plan lessons that meet their needs. They mark their work well and older pupils say they enjoy reading their teachers' comments and answering the questions teachers write on their work. In English and mathematics, teachers use individual targets successfully to help pupils improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and covers all the subjects that it should. It is planned to meet pupils' needs and to build on their skills and knowledge consistently. There is a suitable range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, including sports and musical activities. Provision for music is strong and all pupils in Year 4 learn to play the violin, cello or double bass, while all those in Year 3 learn the recorder. The choir performs locally and the orchestra regularly entertains the school. Talks and presentations by a range of visitors enhance the experiences offered in lessons. These activities make learning interesting and prepare pupils appropriately for the future. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Staffing difficulties have meant that the school had fallen behind in reviewing the needs of these pupils in enough detail. The appointment of a new and experienced co-ordinator for special educational needs means that this is getting back on track.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a healthy and safe environment in which pupils feel secure. They know who they can go to if they need an adult and teachers take their concerns seriously. Health and safety arrangements are addressed thoroughly and risk assessments are undertaken regularly. Child protection procedures are in place and staff training in this area is kept up to date. Pupils have their own targets to work towards; they know what these are and when they have achieved success. A few parents expressed some concern about aspects of care because of the high staff turnover. The school should provide better information about its work and improve its procedures for addressing parents' concerns.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's evaluations of its performance are accurate and enable it to pinpoint areas for further improvement. The action needed to achieve this improvement is clearly detailed in the written development plans. The criteria to judge the success of these plans are rigorous. While the overall impact of the school's plans on standards is currently no better than satisfactory, initiatives are bearing fruit, for example, in the improving quality of teaching. The headteacher and her senior team are steadily ensuring that subject leaders and others with responsibility for aspects of the school carry out their duties rigorously and effectively. Areas that were identified as weaknesses by the previous inspection have been successfully tackled. The headteacher and governors have faced many challenges in recruiting new staff but have persisted in making sure that those appointed are suitably qualified and experienced. This is now ensuring that the overall quality of education is improving again. The school has made reasonable efforts to involve parents in its plans for the future. It has made effective use of its partnership with the local authority by acting on the reviews that have been carried out from time to time by advisers and making good use of specialist support. Throughout the recent changes, the school has continued to provide well for the personal development of its pupils. It has maintained the confidence of most parents but, as outlined above, needs to communicate its plans and successes to them even more effectively. There is now the capacity to raise standards further and evidence that initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The commitment to staff development and a determination to continue to improve the provision for pupils mean that the school is now in a sound position to thrive in the future.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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?	3	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	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?	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	3	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	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us to find out about it. This letter is to tell you about some of the most important things we saw. These are some of the best things

- You enjoy school, behave well and get on well together.
- There have been lots of changes to the staff but your headteacher and the governors are doing all they can to make sure you have good teachers.
- We saw plenty of good work in ICT, art and music.
- The adults in your school listen to your opinions and make sure you know how well you are learning. These are things that can be made better
- We want your teachers to make sure that those of you who find learning quite easy are 'stretched' in your lessons.
- Sometimes boys learn in different ways from girls and your teachers are working to make sure you all find ways to learn equally well.
- The new teachers need to find out about all that happens in your school so that they know how they can make it even better for you.
- The school needs to keep your parents in touch with all the changes it is making and how they are affecting you.

Carry on enjoying your time at High Wych School.