



Victoria Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117423
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280072
Inspection dates 6 July 2006 to 7 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Raminder Arora AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Prince Edward Street
School category	Voluntary aided		HP4 3HA
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01442 865781
Number on roll	237	Fax number	01442 385205
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Carolyn Beard
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Janet Robinson

Age group 3 to 9	Inspection dates 6 July 2006 - 7 July 2006	Inspection number 280072
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school that caters for 237 pupils aged 3 to 9 years. The catchment area is mixed, although generally advantaged socially and economically. The school has the Healthy Schools accreditation and 'Eco Award'. Attainment on admission is average. Almost all pupils have White British heritage and none are new to learning English. A low proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Victoria First is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. The school assesses itself as good in most areas, but on reflection agrees with the inspectors that most aspects are outstanding. The implementation of the school's inclusion policy means there is a real sense of putting the individual child at the centre of learning. Most pupils in both key stages 1 and 2, make outstanding progress and standards are exceptionally high. This is because: teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding; pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; there is very high attendance and exceptionally good support from parents. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because they are offered an outstanding standard of care and personal development. Parents overwhelmingly support the school. Their comments include, "Victoria is a thoroughly excellent school," and "the staff are hardworking, approachable and committed". Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Most children exceed the goals expected of them as a result of good teaching, stimulating curriculum and strong leadership. Management is continually striving for new and higher goals to attain. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher permeates many aspects of the school, with staff sharing a common vision and purpose. There is strong yet challenging support from the governors, so that the school has improved markedly since the last inspection. The school's self evaluation is strong and all involved are aware of the strengths and areas to improve, for example further development of information and communication technology (ICT) and raising standards in mathematics to be in line with reading, writing and science. The school demonstrates excellent capacity to keep moving forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on further development in mathematics to bring standards in line with reading, writing and science. - Strengthen resources in ICT to further enhance pupils' learning in all areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 is outstanding. In the national tests of 2005, standards at age seven were exceptionally high in reading, writing and science. In mathematics they were well above average but not exceptionally high. The provisional results of 2006 tests indicate that standards have risen further in all tested subjects, but not at the same rate for mathematics. The school is aware of the need for further developments in this subject. Children start in the nursery with average attainment for their age. They are taught in a stimulating environment and many exceed the expected goals by the end of Reception. This start is built upon well in the main school, where pupils continue to excel in their learning. This is because pupils' attitudes are extremely positive and the teaching gives a high priority to making learning enjoyable. Based on the very accurate data for tracking pupils' progress across

the school, teachers set and pupils meet the challenging targets. These are well understood by the pupils and ensure an accurate match of work to their needs. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy school immensely and their attendance is excellent. Pupils understand the value of rules and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils acquire a good understanding of different cultures and lifestyles. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. Pupils learn to co-operate and work as a team through various activities, clubs and community events. They have well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. As a result they leave the school as mature and sensible pupils, well prepared for their next stage of learning and the future world of work. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. The pupils demonstrate responsibility through a very effective school council, which is well regarded by all in representing their views. They understand how to maintain safe and healthy lifestyles extremely effectively and readily explain the benefits of exercise and good diet. One pupil said. 'I tell my Mum, no chocolate, but she thinks I deserve it sometimes.' Pupils have been awarded the 'Eco Award' for their very mature concern for the environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers plan an excellent range of activities to excite and motivate children so that they make outstanding strides in their learning. Lessons are planned well for the mixed age classes and based on the use of very thorough assessments. The most effective teaching includes skilful questioning to draw out ideas from pupils. The teachers establish a strong rapport with them and this generates a secure environment where pupils can investigate and try out new ideas with confidence. This was seen in an ICT lesson where pupils were engaged in a research on the Internet. Although pupils worked co-operatively as two to a computer, they were less productive individually due to the limited number of computers. In most lessons teachers have high expectations and provide challenges, which are readily accepted by the pupils. By adopting a wide range of methods and using resources such as electronic whiteboards, teachers enable pupils to develop their different styles of learning. Support staff play a significant role in helping and guiding pupils of all abilities. The overall teaching is not better than good because in some lessons the work is not matched well enough to different abilities; it is either too easy or too challenging.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

'The school strikes an excellent balance between teaching the core subjects and offering fun and interesting activities from the wider curriculum'. So says a parent and the inspectors agree. This is one reason why children enjoy school so much and make excellent progress. The vibrant nursery provides an excellent range of activities that promote children's learning, so that they are well prepared for Reception and Year 1. Throughout the school pupils practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by using them in other subjects. For example, they develop their writing skills by recording what they have done on the school allotment. The quality and range of art and music are testament to the importance the school places on pupils' creative development. The focus on adopting a healthy lifestyle is well established and pupils have access to an excellent range of physical, musical and other extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, support and guidance. All the required policies and procedures to protect children, including police checks on adults who work with them, are in place. The Christian ethos of the school underpins the high quality care staff show for all children. This ensures that they feel safe in school and have someone to go to with worries or concerns. Teachers keep a close eye on how well children are doing and provide excellent support for those who need extra help. Teachers set pupils challenging targets to aspire to and check regularly whether they are meeting them. This results in children knowing what they need to do to improve their learning. This high quality care is recognised and appreciated by parents through comments like, "the school instils confidence and independence in the children and at the same time provides a safe and positive environment".

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a very clear vision of the school, which is shared by all staff and governors. This has resulted in many improvements since the last inspection, including enhanced playgrounds, more computer equipment and improved standards for boys. The school has an excellent capacity to continue improving. The staff and governors have a very accurate view of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to get better still. This results in clear priorities such as the focus on mathematics not being quite as high as reading and writing, and further development of ICT resources. The highly effective systems for checking the school's performance ensure that the views of parents and children are taken into account. Outstanding leadership has resulted in a school where pupils are enabled to achieve their best. The progress pupils make is checked regularly to ensure that teachers provide work that challenges them. Those who need extra help receive excellent support. As one parent put it in relation to their child, "The special

educational needs co-ordinator was fantastic and kept us well informed through the process of reviewing statements and individual education plans". The work of the governors is excellent. They are very supportive but also ask challenging questions, and take firm decisions when they need to, as in the difficult decision not to continue the afternoon nursery sessions because of the cost. This sharp eye for efficiency ensures that the school gives outstanding value for money.

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

You might remember that we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much, and would like to thank you for talking to us and sharing your work with us. We were there to see how well your school helps you to learn, and what we saw and heard helped us to decide that yours is an excellent school. We were very impressed by how well you all behave and how much you enjoy being there. These are some of the things we liked best about your school: - You try very hard with your work and make excellent progress. By the time you leave to go to the middle school, most of you have reached a high standard in reading, writing and science. - You get excellent results because you have highly positive attitudes; your attendance at school is excellent and the staff teach you well. - You learn to work and play well together and to look after yourselves. - Everyone at school takes excellent care of you so that you are safe and happy, and your parents are very pleased. - Mrs Robinson, all the staff and the governors, know what they want the school to be like and work hard together to make it an excellent place to learn and play. There are two things that we and the staff think, would make your school even better: - Mrs Robinson and staff are going to help you to get even better at learning mathematics so that most of you can get to the higher levels. - The headteacher and the governors are going to get more computers and interactive whiteboards to help you learn even more effectively. I think that everyone at Victoria First can work together to do these things. I hope that you go on enjoying all the things you do there that help you to learn and be happy.