



Market Harborough Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120144
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 280745
Inspection dates 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Janet Simms AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fairfield Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Market Harborough
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Leicestershire LE16 9QH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01858 464112
Number on roll	366	Fax number	01858 464112
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Joan Williams
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2000	Headteacher	Ms Jackie Fisher

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Market Harborough is a large, voluntary controlled Church of England primary school. Standards on entry are below the national average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or have languages other than English. Nearly 9% of pupils come from the traveller community but these numbers have been higher in previous years. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The amount of movement of pupils in and out of the school other than at the usual times of joining or leaving is more than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is justifiably proud of its success in meeting all pupils' academic and personal needs. Though it judges its effectiveness as satisfactory, inspectors find it to be good.

Standards are below the levels expected on entry. Pupils learn and achieve well because of good teaching. Reception Year provision is good. Standards are average at the end of Year 6, although boys' handwriting requires improvement and reduces the overall standards in writing. Although analysis of assessment information is better than it was, it is not yet used well enough to guide pupils about what they need to do to make more progress. Standards are above the level expected in visual and performing arts throughout the school and achievement in these areas is good. A good and exciting curriculum not only helps pupils to make progress academically but also creates confident, well rounded youngsters. Pupils' personal development is good and their well-being lies at the heart of all activities. Effective links with partners help all pupils achieve well.

Parents overwhelmingly appreciate the mix of backgrounds in the school, and value the contribution it makes to their understanding of diversity. Relationships are very good among pupils and between teachers and pupils, creating a harmonious atmosphere supportive of learning. Pupils are happy at school and say so. Although attendance remains below average, the school strives hard to prevent absence, organising transport from a local traveller site for instance.

Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in information and communication technology (ICT). Although self-evaluation is accurate, the school is modest about its overall effectiveness and is constantly looking for ways to improve further. Capacity for the school to improve further is good, based on the school's track record since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the handwriting of boys, so that the 'mechanics' of writing do not prevent enjoyment or impede pupils getting ideas down on paper.
- Make better use of information gained from assessment to help pupils understand what to do next to make progress with their school work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good, although the standards they reach are similar to the national average. Their attainment on entry to the Reception Year varies between years, but is always below the level expected and well below expectations for pupils' emotional, social and language development. Pupils make good progress towards the standards they are expected to reach by the start of Year 1, and reach their targets.

By the end of Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress but standards are still below average in English and mathematics, although high in arts subjects. When they were at the end of Year 2, the standards of the current Year 6 pupils were average; they are now above average in science and have good Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Pupils make good progress in reading and then satisfactory progress in writing and as a result standards in English and mathematics reach the national average. This represents good achievement. In other years, pupils now make good progress in the content of writing for other subjects, but bad handwriting impedes achievement for many pupils. Boys in particular do not enjoy writing, commenting on the physical problems they encounter with script.

In the arts, pupils' progress is very good and standards are well above those expected. Most pupils progress well in other subjects. For those who come and go, their progress is less secure over time although it is good whilst they are in school. Teachers' monitoring now ensures that staff know exactly how best to provide for these pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding develops well. The highly successful integration of pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds leads to pupils gaining valuable insights into differing ways of life.

Pupils take on responsibilities willingly, enjoying and learning from participation in groups such as the school council and the environmental 'green team'. They organise fundraising for a variety of causes and are keen to contribute to their local community. Pupils value and respond well to opportunities to gain important life skills, such as teamwork, through taking part in performances. Pupils develop as well-rounded individuals with a very strong sense of moral and social responsibility.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Most attend regularly but the overall attendance rate is below average, mainly because many remain on roll whilst moving around the country with their families. Another factor affecting the attendance rate is that some parents take their children out of school for holidays. Pupils are polite, friendly and confident. Good relationships mean that they cooperate well. Behaviour is good. Pupils respond positively to reprimands for minor incidents of mischief and school procedures to eliminate bullying, often discussing these issues amongst themselves. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle well and observe safe practices around the school and in lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are usually lively and conducted at a brisk pace so pupils remain interested and learn well. The purpose of lessons is made clear and pupils are in no doubt about what is expected of them. Teachers plan well for pupils' differing abilities, including those with learning or emotional difficulties and the more able. Well deployed teaching assistants often make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress. Staff are confident in their knowledge and understanding of all subjects, with particular strengths in the teaching of the arts.

Teachers mark pupils' work carefully but do not always give comments designed to guide individuals towards targets. The best marking helps pupils to assess their own work and identify how to improve but this is not consistent. Handwriting is taught, but many pupils develop a poor pencil grip and other bad habits which continue to Year 6. These prevent many boys from getting good thoughts onto paper as quickly as they would like and the weaknesses are not well enough picked up and rectified.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, subjects are linked together well to make learning meaningful and relevant. These links have improved the content of writing, but not pupils' handwriting. All pupils benefit equally from a good range of learning opportunities and find most of these interesting. The school places strong emphasis on the arts, providing an excellent range of visual and musical opportunities. Pupils and their parents greatly enjoy the drama productions, which develop pupils' social skills and self-esteem well. Pupils also appreciate the high quality, stimulating displays which celebrate their learning and encourage them to want to learn more.

Curriculum enrichment is very good. Older pupils learn French and developing links with schools abroad enriches pupils' cultural understanding. A wide range of visits, visitors, sports and music events and residential experiences extend the opportunities available to pupils and create fun in learning. Large numbers of pupils actively take part in these opportunities. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good. Firmly based on practical indoor and outdoor activities, it develops young children's skills well in all areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and central to the school's work. There are good safeguarding procedures and attention to detail which provide a stimulating, safe, healthy environment in which pupils work and play happily. Child protection arrangements are secure. Pupils feel happy and well cared for, speaking confidently

about the school's support. The vast majority of parents express similarly positive views. Good links with the local secondary school ease transfer into Year 7.

Progress is tracked effectively and learning targets are set but the school recognises that the use of assessment to help pupils understand what they have to learn next is inconsistent and needs development. Comprehensive records and good support ensure that pupils who leave or return during the school year progress as well as others. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. Clear, accurate records help staff to modify planning and teaching. Most parents feel they know how well their children are progressing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. A great strength of the school is the outstanding way in which it includes pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has recruited a cohesive team of committed teaching and support staff who are well supported by challenging, able governors. All involved succeed in maintaining quality provision for pupils who remain in the school throughout their primary education, whilst managing very effectively the diverse needs of others, such as pupils from the travelling community and those with learning and social difficulties.

The headteacher has a very successful record of developing staff for promotion and of ensuring that all staff contribute to school self-evaluation and improvement. Identification of key areas for improvement such as writing, is accurate, but procedures to improve pupils' handwriting lack sufficient focus. Many recently introduced initiatives to improve assessment, whilst not yet being consistently applied, are beginning to make a positive contribution to pupils' achievement.

The school's self evaluation processes are good, including accurate judgements about teaching, although the school is rather modest about its overall effectiveness. Most parents are included well in this process and although a few have concerns about aspects of the school, the overwhelming majority value its inclusion of pupils from different backgrounds. Relationships with external agencies are good, so groups such as travellers or those with learning difficulties receive good support. Excellent resources are well managed to provide a good quality of education for all. Improvement to standards achieved this year and effective steps taken to improve the school since the last inspection show good capacity to improve further.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	3	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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 so much for welcoming us to your school on 27 and 28 June. The other inspectors and I really enjoyed visiting your classes, talking with you and your teachers and looking at your work. I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.

These are the things we liked best

You enjoy school and are happy there; almost all of you and your parents really like the mix of different children in your classes and you all work together well. Your friendly welcome for new children, or children returning to school after being away, makes them feel at home and happy to be there too.

You make good progress in your work and your standards are improving. Your really super artwork and music shows that you enjoy these lessons very much and the displays of your work make the corridors and classrooms interesting, colourful and lively.

You learn well from your teachers. The way they organise your lessons so that subjects like writing and history are linked together, make it easier for you to enjoy your learning.

Your teachers and all the other adults look after you very well, making sure you are happy, safe and healthy. Your happiness is very important to them.

What we have asked the school to do now:

Although your writing has improved lately, many of you, mainly boys, still have trouble with handwriting. We can see this when we watch you write and some of you told us. It's stopping you enjoying putting your interesting ideas down on paper easily and quickly. Teachers are going to try to make this easier for you.

Teachers will give you more information about what you need to do to make your work better; you must make sure you understand all this so you can explain it to other people who want to help you.

I hope you have a good summer holiday and thank you again for your welcome.