



Christ the sower Ecumenical Combined School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134164
LEA Milton Keynes LEA
Inspection number 282475
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 18 October 2005
Reporting inspector Andrew Marfleet AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Singleton Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Grange Farm
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Milton Keynes MK8 0PZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01908 867356
Number on roll	218	Fax number	01908 867165
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Miss Jean Potter
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Anne Hamilton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors.

Description of the school

This new school draws its pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and faiths. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school opened in September 2004 with 55 pupils and has grown rapidly, but there are still no pupils in Year 6. The number of pupils starting the school other than at the start of the academic year is high. Most teachers at the school started at the beginning of this term. Two thirds of the pupils are of a White British heritage. The school is ethnically diverse but there is no one significant minority ethnic group. A sizeable group of pupils are learning English as an additional language, with 19 at an early stage of learning English. Pupils with special educational needs represent a smaller proportion of the school than is normally found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school correctly evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory. Over the past fourteen months the good leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has successfully established many of the essential foundations and structures upon which to build continuing school improvement. The school's ethos reflects strongly its voluntary aided status, especially in the excellent provision for pupils' spiritual development. Relationships are positive throughout the school, the pupils' behaviour is good regardless of ability or background. Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are good and parents are appreciative of the quality of education provided by the school. However, the school is expanding rapidly and many staff have only recently arrived. Not all of those who have responsibilities have sufficient skills and experience for their new management roles. Most pupils arrive at school with levels of attainment that are below average. Standards at the end of the Foundation stage, Year 2 and the current Year 5 reflect this and are also below average. However, with the exception of the writing of pupils learning English as an additional language, pupils in all stages and year groups are currently making steady progress and achieving satisfactorily. Taken overall teaching is satisfactory. There are some strengths, but in a significant minority of lessons the pace of learning seldom accelerates because the teachers do not always make it clear in their plans and explanations, what it is that they expect the children to learn. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body have a good appreciation of the next steps necessary to improve pupils' achievements and raise standards. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Identify in lesson plans and explanations to pupils what they are to learn.* Provide training and support for staff with management responsibilities.* Raise the achievement in writing for those pupils learning English as an additional language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From their lower than expected attainment on entry to the school in all year groups pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils who join the school during the academic year make similar progress to the majority of pupils at the school. In most aspects of their learning children at the end of Reception are unlikely to meet the expected goals for their age. Pupils continue to make steady progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 in 2005 were below average. In relation to their capabilities these pupils, just as the pupils further up the school do, achieved satisfactorily. Standards in Year 5 are below those expected, however there is steady progress and many pupils achieve the challenging targets that they are set. The early identification of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the good support they receive underpins their good progress. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress in many aspects of their learning except in their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Parents frequently commented positively on this outstanding aspect of the school. Its strength reflects the focus that the headteacher and staff have placed upon it. Pupils enjoy being at school and their attendance is good. They are keen to learn and succeed. The school reflects its Christian ethos in every aspect of its life. Pupils reflect deeply both in assemblies and in the room set aside for 'soul space'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have a very strong understanding of what is right, wrong and fair. They apply these principles in their life at school so that their behaviour is very good. The school celebrates its cultural diversity with relish. Pupils are accommodating and accepting of each other. They take care of each other, often demonstrating considerable care by looking after the lonely or left out pupil. Pupils are particularly knowledgeable of how they can contribute to society. They are enthusiastically planning to provide shoeboxes of Christmas gifts for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to lead a safe and healthy life-style. They consider carefully what they should eat and demonstrate good awareness of personal hygiene in the meticulous way that they wash their hands before lunch. The school's provision supports the pupils' all round development extremely well so that they are confident and well prepared for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

From the nursery to Year 5, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Years 1 to 5, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and successfully build on their excellent relationships with pupils. This creates a good climate for learning where pupils are eager to do their best. In the Foundation Stage children make faster progress when adults support individuals and groups as they work independently. The school quickly and accurately identifies pupils' needs when they join the school. Where pupils make good gains in their learning, teachers use the information well to provide tasks that are both challenging and achievable. However, not all teachers are yet successful in ensuring that the work they set for different groups of pupils always matches their abilities. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from early identification. This, along with the good guidance and support offered by all staff, promotes their good learning. On one or two occasions adults were observed leading discussions skilfully so that pupils' speaking and listening skills were effectively developed. This approach also benefits pupils learning English as an additional language. However, the support and the opportunities offered to these pupils to promote their writing skills are not so well developed. Many teachers, including those in the Foundation Stage, are not explicit, either in their plans or in their explanations to their pupils, about what it is the pupils should be learning. As a result, pupils' learning slows, especially when writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In preparation for opening a new school, the headteacher and staff have put in place a good curriculum. It provides a flexible framework that is essential at this time of rapid growth. The curriculum incorporates a wide range of well-resourced activities that interest and excite pupils. Meaningful links between subjects provide pupils with frequent opportunities to practice and extend their basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and computing. Themed weeks, such as the 'One World Week', enrich the curriculum and help deepen pupils' understanding of issues such as cultural diversity. A well planned personal, social and health education programme promotes well pupils' understanding of being healthy and safe. The school organises a good range of out-of-class activities that attract many pupils and make a strong contribution to their learning and enjoyment. Pupils with learning difficulties have clear individual education plans that set out precisely what they need to achieve. Adults working with these pupils follow these plans carefully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance, and support offered to pupils are good. All adults are extremely caring and supportive of each individual pupil. Relationships are very good and due to the high levels of trust and respect, pupils say that they feel safe, secure and able to share their worries. Close adherence to the school's child protection arrangements and good relationships with social services and health care organisations ensures that vulnerable pupils are well looked after. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good guidance to promote their personal and academic development. There are robust and consistently applied procedures for health and safety, and for assessing risks. Knowing that the school is to face a period of sustained growth the headteacher has established good procedures and a warm welcome to all pupils. Both pupils and parents greatly appreciate these. This includes the good assessment of pupils as they join the school, but a few teachers do not use this sufficiently to plan what different pupils of different abilities need to learn.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and her deputy provide particularly good leadership. There is also a strong team of governors. They use their wide range of expertise to challenge the school's leaders by asking pertinent and probing questions. This team has been successful in setting up a new school that has a very strong ethos, where each pupil is valued and with the structures necessary to sustain good improvement and raise standards. So far, the most significant impact of this has been in pupils' personal development. However, the analysis of pupils' work and early signs of improving teaching show that pupils are now in a good position to start learning at a faster rate. The process of school self-evaluation is

strong. Both staff and governors know the school's strengths and priorities well. Plans to address these are well established. Currently, this includes the close monitoring and sensitive support of the many teachers new to the school. This complements the school's good induction procedures and is effective in developing their teaching skills. However, although willing, a significant proportion of the staff lack experience. Not all who have management responsibilities have yet acquired the necessary skills or expertise to carry out their duties in full.

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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?	3	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	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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	2	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	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?	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	3	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	2	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

I want to thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work. We also enjoyed talking to your teachers and watching your times of collective worship.

What we liked most about your school* You go to a very caring and friendly school, in lovely new buildings.* You are well looked after and enjoy going to school.* You are given interesting and useful things to learn.* You are learning as well as you should be doing, thanks to the hard work of your teachers and those who help them.* You behave well, and are becoming kinder and more confident about what you do.* Your school has a very good headteacher and deputy, who know how the school works and are doing the right things to make the school even better.* Your parents are very happy with the school.

What we have asked your school to do now* Make sure that teachers carefully identify and explain to you what you are going to learn next.* Help other teachers to support the headteacher and her deputy by taking on new responsibilities and making the school run even better.* Help pupils who speak languages other than English to become better at writing.We hope that you will continue to do your best and wish you every success in the future.