



East Claydon School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110224
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 288603
Inspection date 27 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	St Mary's Road
School category	Community		East Claydon
Age range of pupils	4-7		Buckingham MK18 2LS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01296 712765
Number on roll (school)	31	Fax number	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs K Brown
		Headteacher	Mrs D Travis
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4-7	27 September 2006	288603

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

East Claydon is a very small, rural infant school to the south of Buckingham. There are two classes, one for Foundation Stage children, and one for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Almost all of its pupils are of White British heritage, and most live outside the village. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is low. As a result of the retirement of the headteacher in July 2006 and the long-term leave of absence taken by the Foundation Stage teacher, there have been changes in the arrangements for teaching in both classes. The school is now run by the headteacher of another local school, who is on-site for two or three days per week.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

East Claydon School is popular with parents, and many commented that they value the good quality of care it provides and the good personal and social development of their children. A particular strength of the school is that it is good at promoting a sense of 'family' in which all individuals are well known, valued, and fully included in all activities. One parent summarised the views of a number of others when writing, 'This is a relaxed, family orientated, caring school.'

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. This is also the view of the newly-appointed acting headteacher. She has quickly and accurately assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is already addressing the issues raised by this inspection.

When they start school, shortly after their fourth birthday, children's levels of knowledge and understanding are generally better than those normally expected at this age. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school, and when they leave at the end of Year 2, standards are also above average. However, there are strengths and weaknesses within this. The strongest area is mathematics. Standards in this subject are well above average because the targets set for pupils are suitably challenging. Writing is not as strong. Although standards in this subject are above average, they could be better. This is because teachers' expectations are sometimes not high enough and the work set for pupils of above average ability is too easy. Standards in reading are invariably above average, and pupils' make good use of the skills learned to help them in their day-to-day lives.

Children are given a satisfactory start to their education in the Foundation Stage class. On entry, they are keen to learn, articulate, and have generally good social skills. They settle in really well, because most attend pre-school sessions in an adjacent room and so they are already used to being at school.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school because key areas of the school's provision: the quality of teaching and the curriculum, are both satisfactory. The quality of teaching is not significantly different now from what it was in previous terms. A weakness in otherwise competent teaching is that work is not always pitched at different levels in order to provide achievable challenges for all within the mixed-age classes. This occurs because teachers do not always make good use of the information they have about what pupils already know. However, this is offset by the good adult to pupil ratios within the small classes, which enable adjustments to be made for each individual as the mismatches become evident.

It is to the credit of the school, particularly the governing body and the acting headteacher, that the school's provision has not been adversely affected by the changes in staffing. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. This is because the educational direction provided has not yet resulted in improvements in the achievement of pupils. Given the new arrangements for the leadership of the school, the acting headteacher is anxious to develop specific subject-leadership roles for the teaching staff, initially in English and mathematics. At present these do not

exist. Her initiative is designed to improve teacher's skills and understanding of these subjects across the school, and to help focus teachers on the importance of pupils' achievement, rather than being content with the good standards of which the school is rightly proud.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers provide challenges at different levels within each year group.
- Make better use of information about what pupils already know to set even more challenging targets for them, particularly in respect of the more able pupils in writing.
- Improve the skills of teaching staff to enable them to work effectively as subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the time children leave the Foundation Stage and move to Year 1 their attainment is above average. Most reach or exceed the goals expected for children of this age.

At the end of Year 2, standards in mathematics are better than in reading and writing because a high proportion of pupils regularly exceeds the nationally expected level of attainment for seven year olds. In reading, the proportion at this higher level is above average, while in writing it is average at best. In the assessments carried out in 2006, no pupil reached the higher level in writing.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their individual education plans contain clear targets for them to achieve, their progress in reaching them is closely checked, and they are given good quality help in class by teachers or teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is evident in the rates of attendance, which have been consistently above the national average for a number of years. The pupils get on well with each other, and their behaviour is generally good. Pupils show satisfactory skills in citizenship. They respond well when given jobs to do, such as putting away equipment at the end of playtimes. However, they could contribute more to the life of the school community. The previous headteacher recognised this and had planned to start a school council to give pupils a forum for expressing their views. This is not yet in place, although it is scheduled to begin during the present term.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A noteworthy feature is the spiritual development of the pupils. This is evident in the respect they show for one another and the way in which they reflect on how well they are getting on through their evaluations of their work.

Pupils know how to keep safe. They show this through their consideration for others at playtimes, and in their knowledge of, for example, the safe handling of equipment such as scissors. Their understanding of healthy living is satisfactory. They have an emerging knowledge of the benefits of healthy food and are able to identify some foods that are good for them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are consistently good at managing their pupils. They make good use of the resources available to them, and work well in partnership with their teaching assistants. They relate well to their pupils and are good at encouraging them. Pupils appreciate the help given to them, and treat the adults with respect.

The weakness in the teaching is that work is too often pitched at an average level, with effective extra help given to pupils who sometimes struggle to keep up. The most able pupils do not benefit from this. They make satisfactory progress because of the amount of individual attention that they are given in such small classes. The teachers' time with these pupils would be more productively used if the starting point for their work was at a higher level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory range of activities for its pupils. A good feature is the 'Arts Afternoons' that are held weekly, and incorporate work in subjects such as art, design and technology, and music. The range of out-of-class activities, such as the after-school soccer sessions, is satisfactory, given the school's size and location. The weakness in the curriculum is that planning does not take enough account of the needs of more able pupils.

The curriculum offered in the Foundation Stage class covers all of the required areas of learning, and there is a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and those chosen by the children. This is important in developing pupils' skills as independent learners.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of the school's pastoral care is good. The procedures for child protection and ensuring the safety of pupils are secure, and pupils feel confident that there is someone to turn to if they have a problem. The single weakness in an otherwise strong area of the school's provision is the quality of academic guidance provided for pupils. The school's systems for tracking the progress made by pupils are satisfactory, but

teachers do not use the data well enough to plan challenges for the pupils, particularly in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

One of the leadership's successes has been to create an orderly and calm environment for learning. The new acting headteacher is now building on this good base for future learning. The ethos of the school is good.

The educational direction set out for the school in its improvement plan is satisfactory. However, the criteria set out for judging progress in meeting the targets in the plan are too often imprecise. This means that there is no objective measure of the degree of improvement made, and may account for the discrepancies between the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and the outcomes of the inspection. The new headteacher has a slightly different agenda. Given the changes already underway within the short period since the start of the school year, and the willingness shown by the staff, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors have done a good job in steering the school through a time of change, and are committed to and supportive of the school. However, they do not always hold it to account in a rigorous enough manner and, in the past, have sometimes relied too heavily on the headteacher to provide direction.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me and being so helpful when I came to inspect your school. I am writing to you to tell you what I think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

I think that your school is satisfactory overall, with some things that are good. I think that you do well in reading, writing and mathematics, but I would like to see you become even better writers.

Here are some of the things I liked best about your school:

- Your school is a happy place to be in. Everyone is friendly and welcoming. Your behaviour is good.
- Those of you who find the work difficult are given lots of help and make good progress.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are safe and are really well looked after.

Your new headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school want it to be even better, so this is what I have suggested:

- I would like your teachers to plan their lessons so that people in the same year group are given different sorts of things to do, and at the same time make sure that everyone has to think really hard.
- I would like your teachers to look closely at how well you are getting on, and try to set you harder targets to reach each term, particularly those of you who find writing easy. The reason for this is that I would like to see you do even better than you already are. I'm sure that you are ready for this challenge!
- I would also like your teachers to find out more about being in charge of English and mathematics instead of your headteacher. This will help them to make your work even better than it is already because you will be taught by real experts.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector