

## Curzon Church of England Combined School

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110429
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	288670
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Carnaghan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	121
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J Reid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Coles (acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2002
<b>School address</b>	Penn Street Village Amersham HP7 0QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 712251
<b>Fax number</b>	01494 712251

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. He gathered evidence from lesson observations, discussions with staff, pupils and governors, scrutiny of pupils' work, analysis of assessment data and documents and questionnaires filled in by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but evidence suggests that the school's self-assessment is justified and these have been included in the report, where appropriate.

## Description of the school

This is a small school where rolls fell over the last three years, before recently starting to rise again. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to average and these pupils have a variety of learning difficulties. Over the last 18 months, the school has experienced a number of staff changes and has been led by an acting headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Curzon Church of England Combined School provides a good education. The school makes a difference for its pupils because it is well led and managed, so that teaching is good and pupils receive excellent care, support and guidance. In consequence, they achieve well and their personal development is outstanding. Despite numerous staff changes, the acting headteacher has successfully maintained a clear focus on providing good opportunities to promote pupils' achievement and personal development.

Parents are satisfied with the school and regard it as very caring and welcoming. Some have concerns about the temporary nature of the school's leadership but many sympathise with the acting headteacher and greatly appreciate her efforts to keep the school both running smoothly and moving forwards. One representative comment was, 'Curzon is a lovely school which leads to very happy children. All staff are approachable and very supportive. Keep up the good work!'

Achievement is good throughout the school. Children start school with skills below those expected for their age and with particularly low attainment in reading and writing. The Foundation Stage is well run, so that children settle quickly into school life and achieve well. By the time they move into Year 1, their skills meet national expectations, except in reading and writing, where standards are below those usually found. Effective teaching in Key Stage 1 ensures that weaknesses in literacy continue to be tackled, so that pupils leave Year 2 with average standards across the board. Pupils and teachers use this as a springboard for improvement. Standards in Year 6 are above average. The school's emphasis on inclusion means the achievement of all groups of pupils is good. A high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, as well as the staff and leadership changes which occurred last year, led to standards slipping a little in 2007. Vigorous actions by the school have reversed the downward trend in achievement and raised standards.

The outstanding care provided has many positive outcomes. Pupils display exceptionally good attitudes to learning and exemplary behaviour. They cooperate very well with staff and other pupils, and are enthusiastic about learning. They say they greatly enjoy school life and their attendance is above average and improving. The school promotes a high regard for safety and pupils have a very clear view on risk and how to respond to it. There is little disruptive behaviour and negligible bullying, and pupils know that any such incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils have an outstanding appreciation of how to live healthily. They know the desirability of exercise and demonstrate this by their enthusiastic participation in the wide range of sporting opportunities available both during and after school. They understand that it is wise to eat a balanced diet and, aided by the school, make efforts to eat and drink sensibly.

Pupils are good listeners and this contributes to their good involvement in the school and wider community. They keenly participate in the school council, expressing their ideas persuasively. Good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology underpins the good development of the skills pupils need for economic well-being. They work with strong independence and are confident and fluent speakers. They develop a good understanding of the value and workings of money. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. However, the school recognises that it provides too few opportunities to develop multicultural understanding and this limits pupils' knowledge. There are practical plans to address this concern in the near future.

The school has plentiful up-to-date and relevant assessment information. It uses this very well to set clear, manageable targets for pupils so they know how well they are doing and how to improve. Marking is also very informative and pupils value this, often writing notes to their teachers, promising to do better. Assessment data is also used well in lessons to provide the correct degree of support and challenge for all pupils. Teaching is good and is usually briskly paced. Lessons are thoroughly planned and pupils are keenly involved in their own progress so that they learn well. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a strong contribution both to pupils' progress and the positive classroom atmosphere. However, lessons can be less than exciting at times. The curriculum is good with numerous enrichment activities and after-school clubs, which pupils appreciate.

The school has endured a period of temporary leadership and high staff turn-over. The acting headteacher has not allowed difficult circumstances to hamper the school's workings. She has set a positive tone and has acted vigorously to ensure consistently good provision and to bring about improvements. The school's self-evaluation is perceptive and its plans for the future are well-judged. Governors are involved in setting priorities and support the school strongly. Other staff are settling into their roles and starting to take up management responsibilities, assisted by the headteacher's effective line management. With improved standards, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection and its effective recent track record suggests that it is well placed to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children join the Reception class from a variety of settings and, in general, start with skills which are lower than expected and very low in reading and writing. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage because planning is excellent, teaching and learning are good and the area is well led and managed. Children thrive during their time in Reception and get off to a good start in their full-time education.

Thorough and regular assessments enable Reception staff to develop a clear idea of children's standards and how well they are learning. Planning focuses very clearly on pupils' needs and interests, providing interesting and challenging activities and ensuring that support is available when required. Teaching assistants are well-informed and capable and make a significant contribution to children's good care and achievement. Children benefit from the supportive, cooperative atmosphere and the pleasant accommodation, including a large covered outdoor area.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' understanding of life in multicultural Britain by increasing opportunities for them to study and experience other cultures.

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## Annex A

## 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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

03 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Curzon Church of England Combined School, Amersham, HP7 0QL

I am very grateful for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. It was very good to meet you and talk with you. You told me that you thought Curzon was a good school and I agree!

There are lots of good features of the school and two things are excellent. Firstly, the way the school cares for you is outstanding so that you know who to go to for help and you also get the best possible advice to assist you to learn. Secondly, this helps make your personal development excellent. There are many good features in this area, but the strongest are your splendid behaviour and great enjoyment of school.

The standards you reach in Year 6 are better than average. This is jolly good because you start in Reception with low standards, so your achievement is good. A big factor in this is the good teaching you receive and the way you are so keen to learn - well done! Many of you will have noticed many changes of teachers in recent years. The acting headteacher has done a very good job to make sure that these changes have very little effect on the quality of your school life or your learning. The school is well led and managed.

Like most schools, there can be improvements. I have asked the school to look at one important area.

- Your understanding of other cultures both in Britain and the wider world could be better. I have asked the school to provide more experiences of different cultures both in and out of the classroom.

Once again, many thanks for your assistance during the inspection. It was very nice meeting you.

With all good wishes for the future,

Sincerely,

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector