



Haddenham St Mary's Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110446
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 288677
Inspection date 30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Aston Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Haddenham
Age range of pupils	4-7		Aylesbury HP17 8AF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01844 291455
Number on roll (school)	74	Fax number	01844 291455
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr David Palmer
		Headteacher	Mrs Jacky L Rice
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

Age group 4-7	Inspection date 30 January 2007	Inspection number 288677
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small, three class village school with close links to St. Mary's Church. Most pupils live in the village although increasing numbers come from further afield. The school serves a predominantly advantaged area and no pupils take up their entitlement to free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. Very few have learning difficulties or disabilities, or speak English as an additional language. The school houses a private nursery on the premises.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where 'the staff are dedicated entirely to providing the best possible learning environment for the children', as one parent rightly commented. At the heart of its work is a strong Christian ethos where every child really does matter and is expected to achieve well. Pupils are proud of their school, feel safe and secure and thrive in its close knit community. They really enjoy everything that the school has to offer and achieve outstandingly well, whatever their ability.

When they begin school, children have skills and understanding which are generally above average, and most are eager to learn. The good provision in the Reception class captures this enthusiasm and ensures that they make good progress. In Years 1 and 2 the teaching is good and there are extremely effective systems for checking pupils' progress and providing additional support where necessary. This, together with an exciting curriculum and positive attitudes ensures that pupils continue to make very good progress. By the age of seven they reach high standards and are exceptionally well prepared for junior school and the world beyond.

The curriculum is outstanding because it not only provides very effectively for the development of pupils' basic skills, but also gives them many opportunities to be creative and enjoy their education. Pupils in Year 2, for example, talked excitedly about the transformation of their classroom into a Victorian schoolroom for the day. They concluded that they wouldn't have liked to be a child then 'because they were so strict!' The curriculum also caters well for pupils' personal development and contributes to the high quality of care and support of pupils. For example, the school has recently been focussing on developing healthy lifestyles. Pupils are exceptionally well aware of the need to live healthily and talk enthusiastically about their 'wake and shake' exercise sessions. One little girl, munching on an apple in the playground, explained patiently that, 'Apples are full of vitamins.' Then commenting that, 'Sweets are full of sugar and make you fat!'

Central to the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. This is recognised by parents and governors. She leads by example and has established a highly effective staff team who work extremely well together. Teachers share ideas on a daily basis but have too few opportunities to work alongside each other. Consequently, whilst the teaching is good it could be even better. Governors are exceptionally well informed and provide a very good balance of support and challenge. The school is outward looking and works effectively with a range of outside agencies, other schools, and the community to enhance its provision. Recently, for example, governors invited a local nursery to use the premises to the mutual benefit of the school and community. The commitment of staff and governors shows that the school has outstanding capacity to sustain and improve upon its record of success over many years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is of consistently high quality by giving teachers more opportunities to work alongside one another and share good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. From their generally good starting points, children make good progress in the Reception class in all areas of learning regardless of how many terms they have spent in school. By the time they enter Year 1 standards are above average. They continue to make very good progress in Years 1 and 2. As a result, pupils consistently reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are significantly above the national averages for pupils in Year 2. In reading and mathematics most pupils exceed the levels expected at the end of Year 2. Pupils' writing also develops very effectively as an extract from a Year 2 poem about a rain storm illustrates, 'I can drown cities and destroy countries with my powerful drops.' The few pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities or who are learning English make as much progress as their peers because of the very good support they receive. They often reach the expected level for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions, is outstanding. They are clearly proud of their school and their enjoyment of their education is evident in their excellent attendance and in the enthusiastic way they talk about their learning. One boy, for example, said how he liked mathematics because 'it made your brain stretch.' Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and generally cooperate well. Their behaviour is good around the school and mostly in lessons, although some pupils find it difficult to take turns and to concentrate for extended periods. Pupils play well together and act safely and responsibly as they move round the school. They look after one another and they take their roles as 'playground friends' very seriously. They are very involved in the life of the church and village community and raise money for a variety of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning is good overall and makes a significant contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement alongside pupils' enthusiasm for learning, the exciting curriculum and very effective tracking and support systems. Teachers plan well and make pupils aware of what they are going to learn. They often make effective links

between topics. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils were enthused to write knowledgeable explanations of different aspects of Victorian life from the work they had done in history. Consequently, lessons are purposeful and pupils are able to review their own learning. Teachers use interactive technology effectively to engage and motivate learners. There were also good examples of pupils working with partners to help consolidate learning and share ideas. Occasionally, though, when pupils are required to sit for too long without this active involvement in their learning, some become restless and distracted. Teachers work very effectively with a team of skilled teaching assistants who make a significant contribution to the quality of education. Learners are clear that teachers' marking and their individual targets for literacy and numeracy help them to focus on what they need to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provides very well for pupils' personal development, and is extremely effective in developing their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Those who are experiencing difficulties are identified at an early stage and given additional support. This enables them to make very good progress. Provision for ICT has improved markedly since the last inspection and it is now used effectively to support pupils' learning in many subjects. There are effective links between subjects, and these allow pupils to enjoy their learning and see how it fits together. For example, in Reception, the theme of Chinese New Year was used effectively to develop children's learning through role-play, writing, lantern making and dance. Children really enjoyed dancing in their dragon costumes to the musical accompaniment provided by their classmates. Pupils' enjoyment is also enhanced by theme weeks, visits and visitors to the school, and a range of clubs. Activities such as the 'global cafand;acute;' in Year 1 help to broaden pupils' horizons on the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. This contributes to their exceptionally good personal development and academic achievements. There is a community atmosphere in the school which is recognised by parents, most of whom hold it in high regard. One, representing the views of many, commented, 'St Mary's has very strong family values.' Staff know the children extremely well and ensure that they are safe and well looked after. Support for vulnerable pupils, including those who find things a bit more difficult, is extremely good, and enables them to feel secure and to make very good progress. There are very effective systems for tracking pupils' progress. These are used to provide additional support where necessary and to set challenging targets for all pupils. As a result, their achievement is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Effective teamwork is the essence of leadership in the school and is very successful in promoting a high quality of care and education for pupils. This in turn leads to pupils' outstanding achievement. Staff take their lead from the headteacher, who has led the school very successfully for many years and established high expectations of all. Together they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, and work effectively to address any weaknesses that are identified. Teachers willingly take on a range of responsibilities and discuss their ideas on a regular basis as a team. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning regularly, but other teachers have too few opportunities to monitor and work alongside each other in order to share the best practice in the school. The day to day management of the school is very efficient and supported by the administrator. Governors are committed to providing the best quality of education for pupils and this is illustrated by the careful management of the budget to ensure that single age classes are retained in this small school.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago to have a look at the things you do and to talk to you and your teachers. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed my day at your school. I thought you might like to know what I found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of St Mary's because it is an outstanding school. You told me that you like being at school because learning is fun. Teachers plan lots of interesting and exciting things for you to do. In Year 2 you certainly seem to be enjoying learning about the Victorians. You seemed to be very grateful to be at school now rather than then! I thought you worked hard in your lessons and always tried to do your best. Well done! A few of you need to concentrate a little bit harder at times! You feel safe in school because the staff help to look after you so well. You also know that it is important to eat well and take lots of exercise.

You are doing very well in school because the teachers make you work hard and want you to do as well as you can. They give you work that helps you to get better, and you told me that your targets help a lot too. A few of you who find things a bit more difficult get lots of extra help, and because of this you do well. You reach high standards in reading, writing and maths by the time you leave. This means that you are all ready to go to junior school and do very well there.

The headteacher has led the school really well for many years. She gets a lot of help from all the staff and they all work very well together to try and make things even better for you. I have asked the headteacher to arrange times when teachers can visit each others' lessons so that they can share their ideas. I think this might help to make your lessons even better than they already are. With the best of luck to you all.

Yours truly

Graham LeeLead inspector