

Cuddington CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110452
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	288678
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Cathie Munt HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	56
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Blumer
Headteacher	Mrs P A Talbot
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	Upper Church Street Cuddington Aylesbury HP18 0AP
Telephone number	01844 291206
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this smaller than average sized infant school the majority of the pupils are English speaking, of White British heritage and live in owner-occupied housing. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than usually found in schools. There is a lower than average number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. When they join the Foundation Stage pupils' attainment is above that normally expected of a four year old. In previous years a significant number of pupils have left at the end of Year 1 to go into the private sector. Since April 2007 the school has been in a federated partnership with a nearby infant school under the management of the headteacher. A statutory notice to become a combined school on two sites has been published. The school holds the following awards; Investors in People and Artsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Cuddington is an outstanding school where pupils thrive in their personal and academic development. Parents recognise this and an overwhelming number expressed their delight at how well the school serves their children. The inspection confirmed these positive comments. Many mentioned the family atmosphere, the open relationships with staff and the 'firm but fair teachers who make learning an adventure.' One parent wrote, 'We are so proud to be a part of a fantastic, well-managed school that has provided such a safe, caring and stimulating environment. My daughter is well equipped now to progress to her middle school. We will all be sad to leave Cuddington, though.'

Exceptional provision in the Reception Year ensures that children enjoy schooling and make rapid progress in learning to read, write and solve challenging mathematical problems. By the time they start Year 1, pupils' skills are above the expected levels. Extremely good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, the majority of pupils continue to attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, performing complex calculations accurately and writing extended pieces of work in a joined-up hand. Care is needed when comparing test results against national figures as pupil numbers in each year are small.

Attention to the pupils' personal development and well-being is a cornerstone of the school's philosophy. This is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe. Behaviour is exemplary as are pupils' attitudes to learning and to each other. They report that there is no bullying but are most vociferous that if there were it would be dealt with effectively by staff. Very high attendance levels indicate how much pupils enjoy the many opportunities offered by the outstanding curriculum and the wide range of additional activities. The school's Christian ethos promotes excellent spiritual and moral development. For their ages, the pupils articulate the greatest awareness of their obligation to those less fortunate than themselves including pupils in a Ugandan school.

Pupils are keen to learn because teachers make lessons exciting and interesting. They meet the needs of all pupils including the able, gifted and talented and those who struggle to master literacy or numeracy. The dedicated and well versed team of teaching assistants provide very effective support. Exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support make pupils feel safe and respected. Child protection arrangements are thorough. There is excellent use of comprehensive assessment data to track pupils' progress and set challenging targets. Pupils relish the many opportunities given to them to take responsibility such as running the toy fair. A very small number of parents felt they did not receive enough information or consultation on their child's progress; however, the majority were most satisfied with the quality and timeliness of this information.

The dynamic leadership and management of the headteacher are fundamental to the school's success. She is well respected and admired by colleagues in Cuddington and in the federated partner school. Her clear educational vision forms the basis of the school's success. The highly effective governing body provides clear direction. Teachers are developing their skills as subject co-ordinators across the two federated schools and this, rightly, is a focus for development this year. Improvements since the last inspection have been most effective in promoting the highest standard. The school is exceptionally well placed to continue with these improvements as it considers its possible transition to a combined school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of subject co-ordinators across the federated schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Foundation Stage children make exceptionally good progress in their physical, social, emotional and academic development and their achievement is outstanding. Almost all attain, and many exceed, the goals set for children of this age; they read and write simple sentences, describe the difference between cubes and cuboids and add and subtract numbers beyond 20.

Exceptionally good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 so that by the time pupils leave they are attaining particularly high standards in reading and mathematics, and above average standards in writing. All pupils achieve equally well because the school ensures that the needs of less able pupils are identified early and programmes to develop their skills and knowledge are provided. Thinking, speaking and handwriting skills are exceptionally well developed and this serves pupils well in other subjects. Results in the national tests in English in 2006 were lower than usual because achievement in writing was average. The school took immediate, and effective, action to remedy this. Consequently, over a half of the current Year 2 pupils have been awarded the higher level 3 in writing. Throughout the school, much of the work, for example, in music and physical education, is of very high quality demonstrating the pupils' extremely effective use of literacy, numeracy, computer and artistic skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted by the strong Christian values that guide all of the school's work. Pupils show a mature and quite exceptional understanding of a range of world cultures. This is fostered through music, art, geography and literature. They respect others' cultures and beliefs because the school teaches them well to be tolerant and respectful of each other. Visitors describe life in the African school that the school supports, and pupils respond sensitively to the different circumstances of children less fortunate than themselves. All age groups work and play together harmoniously. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and have excellent attitudes to work. Their love of school and learning is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils say that they make such good progress because 'lessons are fun and teachers are lovely.' Pupils' understanding of how to lead healthy lives is exceptionally good. The school encourages the provision of healthy food at lunchtime and is looking into the provision of one cooked meal each week. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe through the teaching in physical education and circle time. They make an important contribution to the school community through membership of the school council and more widely through their charity work. The skills pupils need in later life are developing very well because of their excellent social and academic progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils in the Reception class are taught through a variety of methods that develop their learning skills exceptionally effectively. Outstanding teaching throughout the school helps all pupils to

make excellent progress in their learning. Teachers have an excellent understanding of each pupil's progress and learning needs and good quality tasks are well matched to the range of ability found in each year group. Marking is good and gives helpful pointers on how work can be improved. Lessons proceed at a fast pace. This retains pupils' interest and provides many opportunities for discussion and teamwork. Excellent relationships, high levels of concentration and exceptionally high expectations are evident in all lessons. Highly effective support staff are indispensable and pupils gain much from their presence. Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboards to help to capture the interest of all pupils. The school works with other small schools to extend learning opportunities and to provide staff with a wider forum in which to discuss educational matters. The overwhelming majority of parents say that the teachers are most approachable and that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The Artsmark Gold Award has a strong influence on the creativity apparent in the outstandingly rich curriculum. Pupils in the Foundation Stage enjoy a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities which make excellent use of the high quality resources available. For older pupils, the required curriculum is greatly enriched by additional subjects such as French and Chinese language lessons. All pupils, including the most able, are fully challenged. Music and art are great strengths of the school; exciting and well-produced art work enhances the public areas and the pupils participate in church, village and county music festivals. There is an exceptional range of extra activities, especially in sport and the arts. Excellent use is made of the local environment to enhance the pupils' skills and knowledge. Educational visits and activities are thoroughly planned to develop skills of literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through other subjects such as science, geography and history.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding. All staff put pupils' welfare first. Parents agreed, almost unanimously, that their children are safe and well cared for and that staff listen to and act on their concerns. Pastoral support is excellent and pupils report that they feel safe and secure. All current requirements for ensuring the pupils' health, safety and protection are in place. Pupils benefit from the school's close partnerships with other small schools, including the federated partner school. This enables pupils to take part in sporting and creative activities more frequently and to meet up with a wider range of peers than might otherwise be possible. Academic support is of high quality. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully to ensure that challenging targets are set for them to boost attainment. This is supplemented by high quality of marking and effective verbal feedback which ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how they are doing. Teachers are consistently thorough in their responses to pupils' work and their comments help to support effort and challenge and enhance their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has secured high staff morale during difficult and uncertain times. 'Our school has a head who is leading us to a secure future,' wrote one teacher, while another described her 'excellent communication and management skills' saying she 'delegates to and challenges her staff.' Accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, has led to tireless development of the strengths and thorough eradication of any weaknesses. Standards and pupils' achievement have been consistently high over time. There here have been major improvements to the accommodation and curriculum provision has blossomed since the last inspection. This indicates that the school has outstanding capacity for further improvement.

The headteacher is pivotal to the school's success. Working closely with staff and the governing body, she has articulated a very clear view for the future of the school. Staff, governors, parents and villagers support this vision of education unequivocally. Backing for the school, tangible through generous donations and fundraising activities of villagers, shows the esteem in which the wider community regards the school leadership. The headteacher and staff have been supported extremely well by the knowledgeable and hard working governing body. Governors have a clear remit for the strategic development of the school; they ask supportive and challenging questions about how the school can improve further and generally perform their duties to the highest order. The school owes much to their diligent and selfless service.

Following the recent and effective, federation with a partner school, the development of subject co-ordinators, and others with management responsibility, is the next logical step.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	1
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	1
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?	1
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.

Annex A

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	1
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

4 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Cuddington CofE School, Aylesbury, HP18 0AP

Thank you very much for your help in finding out about the school. I agree with you and your parents that Cuddington is an excellent school. Everyone seems to be part of one large family where all of the adults help you to do exceptionally well. Your excellent attendance shows me how much you enjoy school, so I am not surprised to hear that you love coming to school and that you feel safe and well cared for. You know a lot about how to be healthy and safe. Your headteacher has done an outstanding job in making sure that the school is run so successfully. The staff and the governors all help her, of course.

I saw many excellent things on my visit. Here are just some of them.

- Your teachers make lessons interesting and exciting and they are very good at showing you how to improve your work.
- There are lots of exciting things to do in lessons and clubs. Reception children have lots of interesting games and toys. You learn many different subjects such as swimming, French and even Chinese. Music and art are particularly good.
- You all work and play together in such a friendly manner that it makes your school a lovely place to visit.
- You behave very well and work really hard in lessons. This helps your teachers to make sure that you learn lots of new things and make such good progress.

You are extremely lucky to go to Cuddington. It is an exciting and friendly place where everybody wants the best for you. Your school is working closely with another infant school to make learning even better for the children in both schools. The adults are thinking about the schools becoming even more closely linked. If this goes ahead everyone will have a lot of extra work to do but they won't mind because they believe that it will help to make the school even better. Your teachers are beginning to take charge of different subjects and I have asked that they get all the help they need to do this well.

With very best wishes for your future,

Catherine Munt

Her Majesty's Inspector