

High Wycombe Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110463
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	288680
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev David Picken
Headteacher	Mrs Celine Hawkins
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001
School address	Loakes Road High Wycombe HP11 2JU
Telephone number	01494 524220
Fax number	01494 539330

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves a culturally diverse area of High Wycombe. Just under half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and about a quarter are at the earliest stages of learning English. Attainment when children start school in Reception is broadly similar to that expected of four-year-olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below that found nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has been through a recent period of staffing changes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school where pupils of all abilities grow in confidence, achieve well and attain good standards. The overwhelming majority of parents believe their children make good progress. One summed up the views of a great many in saying 'the children are happy and confident at school and enjoy being there, which creates a good environment for learning'.

Standards are above average overall by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6. The value added between Year 2 and Year 6 is significantly better than average in English and science and has been for the last two years. Achievement is good because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are now making good use of assessment information to match work to individual pupil's needs and to set targets to help them to improve. Pupils make good progress during lessons because teachers have high expectations, and pupils fully understand the targets they are set. High quality marking ensures that pupils also know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There are occasions, however, when there are missed opportunities for pupils of all abilities to learn independently and to show initiative.

The curriculum is of good quality and enriched through a good range of out of class activities. Previous weaknesses in the quality of planning have been addressed. The curriculum now provides opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), to progress and develop well. Teachers think about the aim of each lesson very carefully and this helps to ensure that activities are challenging and exciting, which motivates pupils to engage willingly in lessons, concentrate well and produce a good amount of work. However, opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills across a number of contexts could be better.

Pupils' personal development is good because they are well cared for at school and as a result feel secure and happy. Pupils enjoy coming to school and excitedly participate in all activities. They treat each other with respect, behave well and genuinely want to learn. Attendance is well above average. There are strong partnerships with the community and with outside agencies to promote learners' well-being.

The school has been through a period of great change. Self-evaluation, involving staff at all levels, has provided a very accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, reflecting monitoring and analysis that are searching and rigorous. Governance, previously unsatisfactory, is now good. Governors are very much part of school life and are now becoming more involved in its strategic management. The resulting well-focussed actions are bringing about sustained school improvement. This confirms the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory overall. Children typically start school with skills and abilities that are similar to those normally expected of four year olds. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the goals expected of them by the time they move into Year 1. The school has an appropriately high focus upon the development of children's speaking and listening skills. A phonics programme is helping children to make good progress in their spelling and writing. Improved assessment procedures are being used to plan challenging and enjoyable activities to boost children's rate of progress overall. Self-assessment is helping to

raise children's awareness of what they can do and achieve. However, the learning resources, including provision for outdoor learning, are not sufficiently exciting to stimulate high quality creative and imaginative learning. The school has recognised this. Children socialise well with each other and their behaviour is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sustain the improvements in mathematics by increasing the opportunities to use pupils' mathematical skills in a range of different contexts.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils of all abilities to learn independently.
- Improve the learning resources in the Foundation Stage to stimulate creative and imaginative learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Standards are average at age 7 years and above average overall by the age of 11 years. Last year, standards were significantly above average in English and science. Achievement is good overall. The value added is significantly better than average in English and science and has been for the last two years. However, it is just above average in mathematics. The school recognises that progress in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects and actions taken to address this weakness have been effective. Progress in lessons is now good in all classes. The actions to address weaknesses in mathematics have been particularly effective by the age of 7 years and for the oldest pupils in Years 5 and 6 where progress is now very good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress against their targets because of the good quality help and support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and attend very regularly. They behave well, get on well with each other and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils have good relationships with teachers and other adults. The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and pupils are confident that adults listen to their views.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect the feelings of others and have a good awareness of their beliefs. Pupils say that they feel safe and are resolute that adults resolve quickly any concerns they may have. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and about the importance of diet and exercise in leading healthy lifestyles.

Pupils make a good contribution to their school community by carrying out responsible jobs and to the wider community through participation in local events. For example, some of the older pupils are Junior Road Safety Officers, maintain links with the County Council and run an infant Road Safety Club. Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education and to become life-long learners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective because teachers know pupils well, have high expectations of them and plan work that matches their individual needs and capabilities. Monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and rigorous. This means the school is tackling well the occasions when teachers spend too long in explaining the tasks so that pupils have insufficient opportunities to work independently and use their initiative. The best lessons enable pupils to work together and learn from each other. For example, pupils in a Year 6 mathematics lesson gained much from the discussions about mathematical formulae and were able to help each other gain a much deeper understanding of algebraic expressions. Teachers are now using a good variety of teaching styles and methods to challenge pupils' understanding, although some are more confident at working in this way than others are. Assessment is used successfully to identify, track and support pupils' learning needs, and to set group and individual targets. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to improve, make consistently good progress and achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is enriched with a wide range of additional activities, which pupils thoroughly enjoy. A particular strength is the provision for music and sporting activities. The pupils eagerly participate in the choir, school orchestra, steel band and learn to play a variety of instruments. The curriculum meets pupils' academic and personal needs well. Support programmes to boost the progress of pupils who need extra help are in place. Provision for information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection and is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum. Weaknesses in the curriculum have been addressed, particularly in mathematics for the younger pupils. Detailed plans for all subjects now provide opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak EAL, to progress and develop well. However, opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics skills in a range of different contexts across the curriculum could be better.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The support, care and guidance of pupils are of a good standard. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are securely in place, and there are good systems to identify vulnerable pupils. The school draws fully on the expertise of a range of outside agencies to ensure that the needs of all its pupils are fully met. Pupils have confidence in the staff and the school. They say they feel safe from bullying and know that adults will quickly deal with any worries or concerns. Academic guidance has improved and is now of good quality. Target setting helps pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work in English and mathematics. However, this is not yet as effective in other subjects. The marking of pupils' work is of very good quality and gives pupils a clear idea of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has been through a period of considerable change. All of the present staff were appointed during the last three years. The headteacher, new senior management team and teachers are working well together as a team and are providing good direction for the school to ensure pupils make good progress in all subjects. The very effective and rigorous self-evaluation has identified key priorities for development, including curriculum planning and boosting pupils' achievement in mathematics. These priorities are manageable and are already making a positive and measurable impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Teachers and managers have high expectation of what pupils can achieve and are using challenging targets well to raise standards further. Governance, previously unsatisfactory, is now good. The recent work of the governors shows they are more involved in the strategic management of the school. They are holding the school to account for its work and are regularly checking on the school's progress.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

21 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of High Wycombe Church of England Combined School, High Wycombe, HP11 2JU

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We were impressed with your friendliness and your sensible and helpful attitudes towards each other. We think that you go to a good and improving school and there are lots of things that we like about it. Some of them are:

- you behave well and get on well with each other
- you listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons
- the school council represents your views very well and you all help the school to run smoothly; we were particularly pleased to find that some of you are Junior Road Safety Officers
- the school is good at organising lots of extra things for you to do
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this we think that the most important things to do next are:

- to ask your teachers to give you even more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently
- we would like the youngest children to have better resources including a more stimulating outdoor area for learning
- to ask your teachers to give you more opportunities to use your mathematical skills in lots of different ways in all of your subjects.

We are sure that you are ready for this challenge! We know that you will continue to work hard and help your teachers to make your school even better. We hope that you have great success in the future.

Yours truly,

John Earish

Lead Inspector