

Orsett Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115171
Local Authority	THURROCK
Inspection number	290151
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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	208
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amanda Bray
Headteacher	Miss Frances Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002
School address	School Lane Orsett Grays Essex RM16 3JR
Telephone number	01375891383
Fax number	01375891081

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school in which free school meal entitlement is low. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An average proportion of the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Staff and governors are accurate in their evaluation that the school's effectiveness is satisfactory and improving. Significant leadership and staffing difficulties after the last inspection led to a decline in the school's performance. The concerns of parents, governors and the local authority led to extra support to get the school through this period. Governors took the hard decisions that were needed and helped the school closely in its recovery. These problems have now been resolved. The school is improving rapidly under the determined leadership of the new headteacher and is well placed to move forward. Good leadership and management are leading to better teaching and rising standards. The new staff team is working increasingly to a common purpose and shared priorities. Procedures for making sure that all staff are doing their jobs as well as possible are now in place and rigorously implemented.

Much has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which is now satisfactory. Several lessons are taught well, but not enough to achieve the school's targets for higher quality teaching. Teachers do not consistently expect enough of pupils and the technology now in classrooms is not always used creatively to stimulate learning. Achievement is satisfactory across the school. The progress pupils make is improving and standards are close to the national average. Children make a steady start in Reception. Provision here is satisfactory and builds on their pre-school experiences. The most recent national test results for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils revealed some shortcomings. Writing was the weakest of the core skills. There is evidence of some success in improving this area. The best lessons teachers are beginning to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in a range of subjects.

Another area in which considerable progress has been made is the provision for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils' needs are now carefully identified and support programmes put in place. Some of these already show good results, and the progress of pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory overall. Another significant recent improvement has been to the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress and setting them targets. These are helping to ensure that learning builds systematically term by term and year by year. Assessment is thorough but the information gained is not always used to challenge the thinking and extend the learning of more able pupils in lessons or through additional activities for gifted and talented pupils.

Pupils develop into mature and sensible young people, who enjoy school and say how safe and secure they feel. Their good personal development and well-being are a result of effective care, support and guidance and a satisfactory curriculum. Pupils are a credit to themselves, the school and their families. They come to school ready to learn, and work and play together constructively. Their satisfactory academic achievements and good social skills give them sound foundations for the next stage of education and their future lives.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by consistently exploiting opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in a wide range of subjects.
- Bring teaching more consistently up to the quality of the best by ensuring that expectations are consistently high and that more effective use is made of technology.

- Enrich the learning and development of the most able pupils and those with particular talents by providing greater challenge in lessons, extending their thinking and broadening their experiences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception from average attainment on entry and most reach expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Test results for Year 2 pupils have varied over recent years. They were slightly above average in 2006 in reading and mathematics and close to the national average in writing. This difference was because boys did not do as well as girls, especially in writing and more able pupils did better in reading and mathematics. Year 6 test results were above average in English, with reading much stronger than writing. They were not significantly different from the national average in mathematics and science. Current standards are rising and there is evidence from books and school assessment data that the action taken to improve writing is starting to benefit boys in particular.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say how much they enjoy school and like their teachers. This is reflected in above average attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Bullying is rare, pupils from different backgrounds get on well together, and they trust adults to help them should any problems arise. One pupil commented, 'If you have a problem, even at home, you can say it to your teacher'. Pupils are developing a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles, recognised by the recent Healthy Schools award. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, pupils identified possible risks when using the internet. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community through activities such as the school council and charity fundraising. Their capacity to take initiative and to organise activities is not fully exploited in all classes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

By carefully monitoring lessons the headteacher and her senior colleagues are working successfully with staff to improve teaching and to eliminate any weak practice. There are some outstanding lessons which excite and fully engage pupils. Across the school as a whole, expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising. Assessment information is gradually being used better to tailor lesson plans to pupils' needs. Teachers' planning and the deployment of teaching assistants cater well for pupils of average ability and for those with learning difficulties. This is not always so for the more capable pupils or for those with particular gifts or talents. Too often these pupils have to complete work that is quite easy for them before they are given activities which challenge or enable them to develop their independence and initiative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Many recent changes and developments have taken place in the curriculum. More is planned so that it can be more interesting and better meet the learning needs of all pupils. Programmes

to support pupils with learning difficulties have developed considerably over the last year. The school has identified pupils with talents in particular areas but has not provided activities to enrich and extend their thinking. Basic skills are promoted appropriately in most subjects and greater use is starting to be made of computers and other new technology. Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in subjects other than English are becoming more extensive but are not yet consistent across the school. The pupils enjoy the clubs, trips and visits that broaden their interests and experiences. They also thoroughly enjoyed listening to the African Story-teller during the recent 'Book Week'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are happy that ensuring the care and welfare of their children is central to the work of the school. Health and safety procedures are thorough and requirements for safeguarding children are met. Child protection arrangements are in place and understood by all. Recent staff changes mean that not all have been formally trained, although this is in hand. Through recent improvements in assessment and tracking progress, the needs of pupils are more carefully identified so that intervention can take place if they are falling behind or have learning difficulties. Pupils are generally aware of how well they are doing and what is needed for them to get better. Assessment information is used more effectively to set targets for pupils and give guidance on the steps they need to take for them to be achieved, although the quality of marking varies widely among classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A key role has been taken by the headteacher who, in her five terms in school, has urgently and effectively tackled areas of weakness. She has been supported well by the governors who are very capably led. Governors helped to provide stability and continuity for pupils when there was no permanent headteacher. Together, senior staff and governors have established good systems for evaluating the school's performance, based on rigorous monitoring. The improvement plan encapsulates well their vision for the school's continuing development, although initiatives are yet to have a full impact on the standards reached by the pupils. Some of the teachers with leadership responsibilities have only recently been trained to play a full part in checking how well the school is doing but are responding well to this challenge. Problems with the budget in recent years have been dealt with. The school is now on a secure financial footing and gives satisfactory value for money.

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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?	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	2
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	3
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	3

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	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	3

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.

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 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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

27 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Orsett Church of England VA Primary School, Orsett RM16 3JR

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very helpful. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn, particularly during the activities in 'Book Week'. There are many aspects of your school that we judged to be good. You, your parents and teachers are right in thinking that you go to an improving school.

You make satisfactory progress during your time at school. Most of you meet the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school, particularly in science, mathematics and reading. You thoroughly enjoy school, attend regularly, work hard and behave sensibly. You clearly enjoy the clubs, trips and visits provided for you. The care and support you receive is good. You are learning how important diet and exercise are for a healthy lifestyle. You take your responsibilities seriously and make a considerable contribution to the life of the school.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There are some areas where we think that improvements could be made. More could be expected of some of you. The learning of those of you with particular talents could be extended and better use made of computers and whiteboards. Your written work is improving but there is still more to be done if you are to maintain this. We are sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make this all happen.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector