



Cold Aston Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115609
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290274
Inspection date 9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cold Aston
School category	Voluntary controlled		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	4-11		GL54 3BN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01451 820470
Number on roll (school)	61	Fax number	01451 820468
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Geoff Beattie
		Headteacher	David Warren
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cold Aston is a small rural primary school with three mixed-age classes. The majority of pupils come from surrounding villages. Attainment on entry is generally above that to be expected. Almost all pupils are of white ethnic origin. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Since the last inspection in 2001 there have been five temporary headteachers to cover the long-term absence of the school's headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cold Aston is a friendly school that provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Until recently, the long-term absence of the headteacher had caused disruption to teaching and learning, particularly in Years 5 and 6, which had been taught by a succession of temporary headteachers. As a result, pupils in these year groups were not achieving as well as they could. The appointment of the current headteacher, in January 2005, has brought stability to the school. A variety of initiatives have been introduced that have led to pupils now achieving in a satisfactory manner throughout the school. Children are given a stimulating start to their education in Reception, being able to take part in a variety of practical and creative activities. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with standards above those expected for their age. Results of the national tests in 2006 show good standards have been maintained by the end of Year 2. Standards by the end of Year 6 have improved and are now above average in English, mathematics and science. This is a caring school in which all staff are committed to ensuring pupils' health and safety. Parents are very supportive of the school, recognising the way it is improving and appreciative of the way their children are looked after. There are good relationships at all levels, with pupils responding positively to the way they are treated. As one pupil commented, 'There is a friendly atmosphere and a quiet learning environment'. This is typical of the feeling of all pupils.

Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure the needs of pupils in the different year groups in the mixed-age classes are met appropriately. Because of this, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and generally meet the targets set for them. However, the school acknowledges that curriculum planning does not provide sufficient challenge, particularly for more able pupils, in some activities. It has planned intention to do this. The curriculum is enlivened by a variety of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest, such as the residential stay on the Isle of Wight. Pupils' personal development is good and they show care and consideration for others, such as when older pupils look after younger ones during the lunch break. They are well behaved and enjoy coming to school, which is shown in the above average attendance figures. There are satisfactory links with the local community to extend pupils' learning and particularly strong ones with the local church. The strong Christian ethos is much appreciated by parents. One of them echoed the views of others when writing, 'I very much like the Christian values the school teaches the children, so they are well rounded and polite'. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with the headteacher setting a clear direction for the school. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate. For instance, there is recognition of the need to raise standards in writing and to more rigorously monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. Governors are very supportive and keen to develop their role further. The school has sound capacity to make any necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by helping pupils to improve the way they structure their sentences.
- Improve curriculum planning to ensure work is sufficiently challenging for all pupils, particularly the more able.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to better identify how they could be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In 2006 pupils achieved in a satisfactory manner and reached above average standards by the end of Year 6. This shows improvement on previous years when pupils in this year group reached average standards. As children start school with standards above those expected and pupils by the end of Year 2 have consistently maintained above average standards, this shows pupils in Year 6 have not been achieving as well as they could. The most noticeable improvement was in mathematics, which has been a weakness in previous years. Pupils achieve high standards in reading but writing is not as strong, with too few pupils reaching the higher levels in national tests. The school has identified weaknesses in pupils' skills in constructing interesting, varied and increasingly complex sentences as they pass through the school as the main reason for this. The progress that pupils make and the standards reached in information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved since the last inspection, and are now satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic learners and are confident to voice their opinions. They respond well to the strong moral code, and behaviour, in and out of lessons, is good. Pupils work very well with each other and are polite and courteous to adults. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, which is shown in their tolerance of the views and opinions of others. The mutual respect and trust shown by staff and pupils promote a strong community spirit in school. Pupils are mature, articulate and keen to take on responsibilities, although opportunities for them to do this are limited, both in school and the wider community of the village. Pupils are adequately prepared for their adult life. They have a good understanding of healthy living and how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and so are able to explain new ideas and demonstrate new techniques in a confident manner. Because of this, pupils are clear about what they are to learn and how to set about their activities. This was evident in a literacy lesson for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 on planning and drafting poems. This teacher's explanation of how to use metaphors, similes and personification effectively helped pupils to add interest and variety to their poems. There is care taken to ensure that lesson plans take account of the progressive development of skills in the mixed-aged classes. The school recognises that some lessons do not provide enough challenge for pupils, especially the more able, and so they do not achieve as well as they could. The school is beginning to address this issue. Lessons are managed well and this results in a friendly and orderly learning situation. Relationships are good and this makes a positive contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, there is emphasis on providing pupils with practical and creative activities that stimulate their interest and enjoyment. Through the rest of the school, provision for ICT has been successfully improved since the last inspection. The way the curriculum is planned results in some activities not being challenging enough, especially for more able pupils. Visitors and themed activities such as a Tudor Day and a celebration of international food add interest to the curriculum. The school provides a wide range of after school activities, productions and trips that suitably develop pupils' academic, creative and personal skills. A specialist teacher of French from the local secondary school works with Years 5 and 6 each Thursday, and this link effectively extends the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, support and guidance is satisfactory. The school provides a supportive and secure environment and staff are successful in building trusting relationships with the pupils. Pupils feel they are treated fairly and say that they can turn to adults if they are upset. Procedures for child protection are secure and rigorous risk assessments are in place. A minority of parents and pupils have concerns about the way some incidents of inappropriate behaviour have been dealt with and the school is actively seeking ways to address this issue. The school has satisfactory systems in place to track pupils' progress. However, this information is not always used effectively to show pupils how to improve their work. Support is carefully targeted at those pupils

with learning difficulties and disabilities and because of this they make the same progress as other pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The stability that leadership and management have brought to the school has raised staff morale and this is now good. All involved with the school share the vision of the headteacher and are fully committed to helping pupils achieve to their full capability. Over the last two years the school has worked closely with representatives from the local authority and other providers to develop provision. The success of this can be seen in the improvement in standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science in 2006. These links are continuing with a focus on the priorities identified in the school improvement plan, such as raising achievement and standards in writing. The school improvement plan provides a secure basis for school development in 2007 but lacks an outline of how this can be carried on in the longer term. Arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning but they lack sufficient rigour. The school accepts they need to be refined to more effectively identify areas in need of improvement. Governance is satisfactory, with governors keen to be more involved in strategic development planning for future years.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	2
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	3
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?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed talking to some of you and finding out about all the things you do, and would have liked a longer visit to speak to even more pupils. We would like to tell you what we found your school does well and how it could improve further.

Your school is a very friendly place in which to work and play. You are all well behaved, you work hard and enjoy coming to school. You said that you feel safe and secure in school and you are looked after well. Your parents are very pleased about the way the school takes care of you. We are pleased your attendance is above average, which is a credit to you all. Most of you reach good standards in your work. You are good readers but not as good at writing and sometimes the work you are given is too easy. Your headteacher knows this and has some good ideas about how teaching can be developed further to help you improve your writing and give you work that always makes you think hard.

All adults in the school are proud of you all and told us you are kind and considerate to others. You are given interesting things to do and there are many clubs, school productions and educational visits for you to take part in. We particularly like the way that pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to learn to speak French.

We hope you continue to work hard and have a successful year ahead.