



Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116285
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290484
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Vanessa Ward

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ecchinswell
School category	Voluntary controlled		Newbury
Age range of pupils	4–11		RG20 4UA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01635298288
Number on roll (school)	94	Fax number	01635297667
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Stephen Miller
		Headteacher	Mrs Catharine Healy
Date of previous school inspection	17 February 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	1–2 November 2006	290484

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary school is smaller than average. The pupils are White British and come from a mix of social backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average, although very few pupils have statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education and has strengths in the way it cares, guides and supports its pupils. This promotes good personal development, and pupils show positive attitudes to learning and behave well. Through its focus on English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), the school is equipping the pupils satisfactorily with essential skills they will need in later life. The effective provision in the Foundation Stage gives the children a good start to their academic and personal development. The school's good links with other agencies are used effectively to provide specialist help where required. Parents are very supportive of the school, expressing the view that 'we are impressed with the dedication of the staff'.

The school has been through a period of significant change in the past three years. During that time, the school has had two headteachers, an acting headteacher, and one out of the present total of four teachers has joined the school. Also, four of the six learning support assistants have been appointed. Following her appointment, the present headteacher carried out a detailed and accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has subsequently put in place a comprehensive range of strategies to bring about improvement. These are leading to better teaching and are beginning to accelerate pupils' achievement in lessons. However, these initiatives have not yet been in place long enough to have a significant impact on pupils' progress in the long term, and more needs to be done to raise standards, particularly in mathematics and writing. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve standards in English, mathematics and science that are broadly average. Their achievement is satisfactory and is improving as a result of the strategies introduced by the headteacher. Better teaching is raising pupils' achievement, but these new strategies are not yet fully embedded and used consistently in all classes.

The headteacher is supported well by the staff and governors. The monitoring and evaluation of performance is thorough and is used effectively for both the professional development of staff and to promote improvement. The roles of subject leaders are at an early stage of development, and they currently have too little influence over standards and achievement in their subjects. The improvements made so far to develop the leadership team, improve teaching and raise achievement, indicate that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and English by Year 6, paying particular attention to writing.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, so that a greater proportion is good or better.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders to increase their influence over standards and achievement in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. The children's skills when they enter the Foundation Stage are wide ranging and vary considerably from year to year. Most children have skills that are typical of or below those expected of four-year-olds. They make good progress and, by the end of the Reception year, the large majority achieve the levels expected with a significant proportion exceeding them in several areas of learning.

By the end of Year 6, standards are average. Writing is the weakest area and the school is working hard and successfully to raise standards. It has identified specific areas in both writing and mathematics, with an initial focus on sentence work in writing and on problem solving and calculation in mathematics. These initiatives are proving successful and the school recognises that this work needs to continue. The school has introduced more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, this being accompanied by intervention to provide additional support where it is needed. As a result, progress is beginning to accelerate. Tracking information shows that all pupils make satisfactory progress, with pupils having learning difficulties and disabilities sometimes making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The pupils enjoy their time in school, expressing particular appreciation of the 'calm environment' and the pleasure of learning with their friends. They enjoy eating healthy foods in school and have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A recent focus on improving behaviour has promoted their moral and social development well. Pupils are well aware of the school's new system for rewards and sanctions, and value the fact that they were consulted when it was being devised. They learn to respect the values and views of others through assembly themes and group discussions. They say that they feel safe and secure in school and know that the teachers will help them if they are upset. Their cultural understanding develops well through subjects such as art, music and literature, though the school could do more to increase the pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in Britain. Pupils readily take on responsibilities and carry them out conscientiously, such as clearing away after lunch and answering the telephone. They influence school improvement through school and class councils and learn about democratic processes as they elect their councillors.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and account for the satisfactory progress that pupils make. During the inspection, some good teaching was observed and, in these lessons, pupils made good progress. The school has introduced several strategies which are improving teaching and are beginning to accelerate pupils' progress. These include sharing the purpose of the lesson with pupils, so that they know what they are intended to learn, raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and increasing their understanding of how pupils learn. However, these strategies are not yet fully effective in all classes, with the result that pupils' progress is uneven as they move through the school.

Pupils say that they enjoy learning because 'the teachers give us fun things to do'. Children in the Reception and Year 1 class thoroughly enjoyed using resources linked with Hallowe'en to help them count. Pupils in Year 2 worked enthusiastically to follow written instructions which told them how to make a jigsaw puzzle out of a decorated envelope. Such enjoyment, combined with good relationships, encourages the pupils' positive attitudes to learning.

Support staff work well with small groups of pupils, often helping those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers know their pupils well and are using assessment information with increasing effectiveness to help them keep track of how well each pupil is doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is being reviewed to support the school's priorities. For example, planning has been revised to increase the focus on learning outcomes for pupils in English and mathematics. Similarly, the school recognises that pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT across a range of subjects. Pupils of all abilities enjoy a full curriculum. Links with a local school provide enrichment for more able pupils. Educational visits and special events, such as an Arts Week, enhance the curriculum. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through teaching about health, safety and relationships. The after-school clubs provide considerable encouragement to pupils to take exercise and to enjoy learning. In the Foundation Stage, the stimulating curriculum promotes enjoyment of learning, and good academic progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care, guidance and support provided for the pupils enables them to make good progress in their personal development. Procedures to promote health

and safety are very effective. Careful consideration is given to supporting pupils with learning difficulties. As one parent commented 'we cannot thank the school enough for helping our child'.

A recent initiative to improve behaviour has proved successful. The school provides good support for pupils when they join the Reception class and leave in Year 6. It is currently piloting a system to improve the academic guidance given to pupils, so that they are more involved in understanding and evaluating how well they are doing. This is proving very effective and there are plans to extend it across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and have some strengths. The work of the headteacher is particularly effective. She has successfully raised the awareness of staff and governors regarding the school's strengths and weaknesses and has established strong commitment to raising standards. The procedures for self-evaluation and subsequent improvement planning are rigorous and accurate and the headteacher is extending the process so that it involves all staff and governors. The views of parents and pupils are sought, valued and taken into account. A new senior leadership team has been established and is working effectively. Actions taken so far are beginning to raise standards. The school has rightly concentrated on the subject management of English and mathematics. The leadership roles for other subjects are beginning to be developed.

The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors support the school and understand its strengths and weaknesses. Their degree of involvement in strategic planning is currently being increased.

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	3
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.

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	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	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 for making me feel welcome when I visited your school recently. It was very useful to listen to what you had to say about what you enjoy doing.

Your school is a happy place and provides you with a satisfactory education. Your parents and carers speak very well of it. They think that you are well cared for in school and I agree with them. You told me that you enjoy being in school and feel safe there. You know that the adults will always help you if you are upset or worried. Your teachers give you interesting things to do and this helps you to achieve satisfactory standards in English, mathematics and science. Your teachers are trying to help you to do even better, especially in writing and mathematics, and I have asked them to continue with this. The teachers work hard to find ways to make their teaching even better, and to help each other so that they teach all subjects well, and I have asked them to do more of this.

The school is good at helping you to grow up and take on responsibilities, such as helping to clear away at lunch time. You eat fruit and vegetables in school and are involved in sports. These things help you to be healthy. You behave well and show that you care for each other, and this helps all of you to enjoy learning. I am pleased that you enjoy sharing your ideas for making your school better through your school and class councils.

Your headteacher, teachers and governors are working hard to make your school better. I hope that you will help them as much as you can.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Ward

Lead inspector