

Essendon Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117393
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290819
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Spragg
Headteacher	Mr Rod Woodhouse
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	School Lane Essendon Essendon Hertfordshire AL9 6HD
Telephone number	01707 261209
Fax number	01707 258278

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most other primary schools. It is situated in a village near Hatfield. The majority of its pupils are of White British heritage, although significant proportions are from Irish Traveller and Roma backgrounds. One or two pupils from other minority ethnic backgrounds also attend, although very few speak English as an additional language. The proportions with learning difficulties and disabilities and/ or who are eligible for free school meals are about average. While broadly average overall, attainment on entry varies considerably within year groups and from year to year.

The school has a Healthy Schools award and was accredited with the Hertfordshire Quality Standard in October 2003. A member of staff won physical education Teacher of the Year in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Essendon Church of England Primary is a good school, which matches its own judgement of itself. Good leadership and management have produced steady improvements in teaching and learning, which are also good. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well. The effective use of assessment information is an important factor to pupils' good achievement. As pupils move through the school, their learning needs are checked, challenging targets are set accordingly and teaching is adapted to meet different needs. This has produced above average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, which are reflected particularly well in the results of the Year 6 national tests in 2006. These were above average in all three subjects and included a particularly strong performance in English. In this subject, all pupils reached the normally expected level for their age and many exceeded it. These skills mean that pupils are prepared well for their future. Towards the end of Year 2, teachers' assessments have usually shown average performance. Standards currently look above average, reflecting improvement in the quality of teaching and learning through Years 1 and 2. This good teaching is increasing rates of progress and producing good achievement. Children in the Nursery and Reception class are currently making satisfactory progress, although their personal, social and emotional development is good. While most of them are on course to reach the expected goals for their age, progress in the Foundation Stage is not as good as that at Key Stage 1 or 2. A key factor is that the outside area limits the school in its ability to enhance provision for children in all areas of learning.

Records indicate that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets. Recently, some have achieved very well, reaching expected levels for their age in Year 6. Tracking and analysis of pupils' progress shows that in the past pupils of Traveller or Roma heritage have not achieved as well as other groups. The school's response has been commendable. Working in close partnership with local agencies, staff have undertaken training, adapted teaching styles to meet families' cultural needs and forged closer links with them. Records indicate that the progress of these groups is picking up, although it has not yet had time to feed fully into national test results. It is, however, clear that the attendance of pupils from these backgrounds has improved considerably.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are exceptionally keen to speak to visitors about how they are getting on and are emphatic that school is enjoyable. Attendance is below average statistically, because travelling pupils are counted as absent when 'on the road'. When this is taken into account, attendance is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know important ways of keeping themselves safe. Pupils know a considerable amount about healthy eating and they take part very energetically in the school's exceptional sporting opportunities. Contributions to the community are another outstanding feature with considerable involvement in local village events. A good curriculum is enhanced well by information and communication technology and residential visits. Care, support and guidance are outstanding, owing to good academic monitoring and exceptionally good partnerships with agencies that ensure strong personal and academic support for all pupils. The school's self-evaluation has been effective in ensuring improvement since the last inspection and good value for money is effectively achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that recent changes in provision for pupils of Traveller and Roma background become established routine, so their achievement and standards rise even further.
- Improve provision in the Nursery and Reception area, especially outdoor provision, so learning in all areas is maximised.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards in Year 6 are currently above average and results of the 2006 national tests in English, mathematics and science were also above average. Pupils' attainment when they begin school varies considerably from year to year, and this is reflected in fluctuations in standards in different years. Nevertheless, by monitoring performance carefully and intervening with appropriate support for pupils' learning when necessary, such variation is reduced as far as possible. Differences in achievement in different subjects are also addressed successfully. For example, analysis of recent results indicated that pupils' use of observations and experiments in science was not as strong as it should be. This weakness became a focus for teaching and learning and, as a result, it is now improving rapidly. Similarly, standards in Years 1 and 2 are rising from average to above average levels in current work. Achievement throughout the school amongst travelling pupils and those of Roma heritage are also rising strongly, owing to powerful initiatives. However, progress of children in the Nursery and Reception class, while satisfactory, is not as fast as in other age groups. This is particularly related to weaknesses in outdoor provision. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well provided for and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils have very responsible attitudes towards their work. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary. Pupils with emotional difficulties are supported very effectively. Children in the Nursery and Reception class, along with others, listen effectively and play together well. Pupils attend school enthusiastically. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils co-operate very effectively with each other and staff. Those pupils asked all felt that bullying is very rare indeed. Furthermore, they were clear that 'every single member of staff could be gone to, to help'. Pupils know a considerable amount about cultures different from their own and express particularly tolerant views, although it is unclear whether they understand the extent of diversity in Britain. Pupils know a lot about healthy foods and nearly all of them are particularly enthusiastic about physical education and sports, which the school provides very effectively. Contributions made to the community are another outstanding feature. A very telling event is the annual sports day that is held at the local cricket club, and opened to the whole village.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment and marking are used effectively, so planning meets the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities through the school. Typically, the pace

of lessons is brisk and teachers use questions well to make pupils think about their learning. This effectively contributes to their good progress. Examples of this were apparent in nearly all lessons that were observed. While satisfactory, teaching in the Nursery and Reception class is significantly restricted by lack of space in the outdoor area. This limits its use for planned experiences in the required areas of learning, and is an important factor in children's progress towards expected goals being slower than it might otherwise be. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and work effectively with those pupils allocated to them, ensuring that they understand what to do to make good progress. This is especially the case for pupils with learning difficulties. The particular requirements of pupils with a travelling or Roma heritage are also met effectively and assessment records indicate that their rates of progress have recently picked up significantly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It contains all required subjects and areas of learning for the age groups on roll and much more besides, especially in aspects of sport. Opportunities to play tag rugby, rounders and lacrosse are good examples, and the school has experienced considerable success in competitive events locally and even nationally. In English, mathematics and science, adaptations of what is taught meet the needs of all pupils effectively, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Opportunities are provided for pupils to talk about matters that concern them. Visits, including residential trips and visitors further enhance learning. Outside accommodation, however, restricts what can be planned for Nursery and Reception children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This aspect is outstanding. Everyone works exceptionally well as a team, always holding the interests of pupils to the fore. A telling example is how staff are wholeheartedly embracing new ways of including Irish Traveller and Roma families, so their children benefit as fully as possible from teaching. Pupils' academic and personal progress is checked regularly and very conscientiously in all age groups. The information is used effectively. Procedures for safeguarding and protecting pupils meet current requirements and guidelines. Rewards are used very sensitively to promote pupils' academic well-being, as well as to encourage positive attitudes and behaviour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. Parents are overwhelmingly complimentary about the school and the way it is run. The headteacher, assistant headteacher, governors and staff monitor the school's performance effectively and ensure that any weaknesses they uncover are brought to each other's attention and addressed. Partnerships with outside agencies are forged very effectively by the relevant staff and co-ordinated to good effect, so advice and expertise benefits all. Exceptional care and guidance ensure strong equality of opportunity for all pupils. Rising achievement and above average standards provide a good track record, indicating that the capacity for further improvement is good.

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

26 April 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Essendon CofE Primary School, Essendon, AL9 6HD

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful during the time that I was with you. Your school council told me that they believe your school is good. I agree with them. I also think that your work and progress are good. I was very pleased to hear so many of you tell me that you enjoy your lessons and that your teachers look after you very well indeed. I agree with you about these things as well.

What I like most about your school

- Your behaviour is excellent.
- Teaching at your school is good and you learn well.
- All the different sports that you do help to keep you fit and healthy.
- You get on very well with each other in groups and play together exceptionally well.
- Mr Woodhouse and all the staff lead and manage your school well, so it runs smoothly and gives you good opportunities to learn.

What I have asked your headteacher, staff and school Governors' to do next

- Make sure that the school continues with the new ways of working so that Roma and Traveller children do even better than they do now.
- Improve what is available in the outdoor space for children in the Nursery and Reception class.

I hope that you will continue to enjoy your school and be proud of it, helping your teachers to make it even better.

John W. Paull

Lead Inspector