



RAF Benson Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123028
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292561
Inspection date 7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Pritiben Patel

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	RAF Benson
School category	Community		Wallingford
Age range of pupils	4-11		OX10 6EP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01491 836460
Number on roll (school)	143	Fax number	01491 824757
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Martyn Spence
		Headteacher	Mr Alan White
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2004		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

RAF Benson Community Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. Pupils who attend are almost exclusively from the RAF service community and as a result the proportion of pupils who join, or leave the school part way through their education is significantly above average. Almost all pupils are of White British background. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils' with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average. The school has had some changes in leadership and the current headteacher has been in post since September 2004. The school has been awarded the Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

RAF Benson Community Primary School is a satisfactory, but improving school, with good features. The RAF context brings positive aspects such as extra support, but also challenges, such as high pupil mobility. Although leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, the headteacher's leadership is good. As a result, the school has come a long way over the past four years and pupil progress has improved. A large proportion of the community are highly supportive of the school. One parent wrote, 'I would be very pleased if my sons could see out their primary years here'.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Although there is some good teaching, inconsistencies remain, especially in Key Stage 1. Teachers are inconsistent in their expectations of pupils' performance and do not always set tasks that are sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils. Teaching is effective in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. From average starting points, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. However, the rate of pupils' progress slows and by the end of Key Stage 1, standards in the national assessments in 2006 were significantly below average in mathematics and writing. Rapid progress is made in Key Stage 2 so that by the time pupils leave in Year 6 standards are above average. Achievement is therefore satisfactory overall.

The school works well with outside agencies to meet the needs of pupils and effective induction systems are in place for the many pupils who arrive at the school other than at the expected times. Pupils are cared for satisfactorily and receive appropriate academic guidance. The school uses assessment information well to track pupils' progress and identify those who need extra help. Although pupils now have academic targets for improvement they are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating for themselves, how well they are achieving them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well so that they achieve in line with other pupils.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with good features. Pupils enjoy coming to school for example, one pupil explained, 'School is fun'. Attendance is good. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, and good, when teachers have high expectations of pupils and the teaching is pitched at an appropriate level. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep safe and contribute to the community through recycling and organising the Christmas Fayre.

The curriculum is satisfactory and some teachers make effective use of cross curricular links. The head and senior management team demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement. This is evident in the increase in pupil progress and standards at Key Stage 2 as well as the effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection by developing information and communication technology (ICT), improved marking and the continuous development of teaching and learning. The school understands the importance of improving teaching and learning as well as standards at Key Stage 1 for all pupils, including the more able.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards at Key Stage 1 for all pupils.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching by ensuring all teachers have high expectations of pupils, that activities are sufficiently challenging and pupils are more involved in evaluating their own achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and they reach above average standards by the time they leave school. High pupil mobility impacts on both standards and achievement. When they join the school in the Reception class children's skills are average and they make good progress. Pupils underachieved in Key Stage 1 and standards in the national assessments in writing and mathematics fell significantly between 2005 and 2006. Standards were low in reading, very low in writing and mathematics in relation to the national picture. No pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics and science. Results in these subjects have improved since 2004 and standards are above the national average. The school has rightly identified the need to address boys' writing throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with good features. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their work on 'Portraits painted by famous artists', 'The Story of Creation' and 'India and Chembakoli' demonstrates their sound progress. Pupils are given opportunities to show responsibility and contribute to the school through the school council and running the healthy school tuck shop. They have a good understanding about how to adopt healthy lifestyles and also understand about how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school. Pupils enjoy their time at school and attendance is good. They are prepared satisfactorily for future life as they develop skills of negotiation and working together in the classroom, as well as gaining satisfactory skills in English, mathematics and ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is stronger in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 and this is reflected in the standards that pupils achieve. Although, examples of good teaching were seen during the inspection, not all teachers' expectations are high

enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Teachers use assessment information to plan work for their pupils but they vary in their ability to match work to individual needs. In some classes the more able are not challenged sufficiently. In other lessons teachers use questions very effectively and strategies such as partner talk to challenge pupils' thinking and consolidate their language skills. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the quality of education, particularly for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Marking gives pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Some teachers make good use of cross curricular links. For example in a mathematics lesson observed, the teacher explained key vocabulary in a word problem that helped pupils to understand the type of calculation required. The teaching of ICT is becoming more effective and resources are improving. The schools' focus on improving standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1, as well as improving boys writing in particular, is an appropriate priority. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive effective support from both teachers and teaching assistants and a variety of reading and writing programmes are effectively in place for them.

Pupils take advantage of opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities such as the running and cricket clubs. There is a good level of active involvement in the broad range of tasks for children in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Induction procedures are effective. As a result, the needs of the many newly arrived pupils are quickly assessed. This enables them to settle quickly and get the support they need. The school uses assessment information well to track pupils' progress and identify those who need extra help. A range of strategies are used successfully to support pupils who might fall behind. The school keeps a close check on pupils who are potentially vulnerable. Procedures for child protection are in place. Comprehensive checks are made to identify the risk involved in activities in and out of school. The school has good links with outside agencies and consequently pupils are well supported, in particular those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Target setting is in place and pupils know what they need to do next to achieve their targets, however, there is insufficient involvement of pupils in evaluating how well they are doing to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good features. The headteacher provides good leadership and fosters a good level of teamwork amongst staff. The school has developed the role of middle managers so that they monitor, evaluate and are accountable for the areas they lead. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory overall, although their judgement of teaching and learning was over-generous. The school analyses and monitors pupil data well to identify both strengths and weaknesses and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified boys writing as an area for development.

The school understands the importance of improving teaching and learning so that it is consistent throughout the school as well as raising standards at Key Stage 1. Governors have a good understanding of the schools strengths and of areas that require further development and contribute effectively to its self evaluation. Capacity to improve is good as demonstrated by the schools' successful and improving track record of pupils' achievements over the past three 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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	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

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at all your work.

We think that you go to a satisfactory school that is improving, and this is why:

- you generally behave well and get on well with each other
- you make satisfactory progress because you have some good teaching
- there are extra things for you to do that help to make your learning more interesting
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are safe and are well looked after
- your headteacher is working hard along with your senior teachers to make your school even better
- your governors do a good job.

There are things that can be improved in your school. Some of your teachers have good ideas and always teach you well and so we have asked them to ensure that you all have good teaching all the time. You also need to be more involved in your lessons and some of your teachers need to provide some of you, with harder work.

We also think that those of you in Year 2 should get higher levels in your Key Stage 1 tests. I'm sure that you will rise to the challenge!

With best wishes for your future success,

Pritiben Patel

(Lead inspector)