



Longcot and Fernham Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123152
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292598
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kings Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Longcot
Age range of pupils	4–11		Faringdon SN7 7SY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01793 782381
Number on roll (school)	106	Fax number	01793 782381
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Claire Blesing
		Headteacher	Mr David Howlett
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007	Inspection number 292598
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Longcot and Fernham is a small rural school. Its pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and are generally from advantaged home circumstances. Most live in surrounding villages or come from the nearby town of Faringdon. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Longcot and Fernham CE Primary is an improving school. Currently, it provides its pupils with a sound education, and has a number of strengths. The parents' views of the school are positive.

Since his appointment in April 2004, the headteacher has made many improvements including, for example, good arrangements for the teaching of mathematics. Under his leadership, the performance of the school is getting better. There are now clear indications that pupils are beginning to make good progress after a number of years in which progress was satisfactory. Since this is a small school, its performance in a single year needs to be treated with some caution. This is because variations in the attainment of each individual can have a disproportionate effect on the school's performance.

Children are given a sound start to their education in the Reception year. When they begin school, their attainment is above average. In particular, many have good basic skills in literacy and numeracy. They make satisfactory progress, and most either reach or exceed the goals expected of children by the time they transfer to Year 1. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the facilities for its youngest children. However, the lack of an experienced early years assistant for some of the sessions means that children do not always have enough access to the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. By the end of each key stage, in Years 2 and 6, standards are above average. In recent years, there has been a trend of improvement in the rates of progress made by pupils. Last year, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and there are many instances of good teaching. Teachers are hardworking and conscientious. They are generally good at making learning interesting and fun, and this is appreciated by the pupils. One pupil commented, 'I really like what we do in class. I think that teachers put a lot of effort into our lessons.' However, teachers sometimes focus on the activities to be done rather than the learning that is intended. The impact of good teaching and potentially good teaching is reduced by shortcomings in systems for tracking pupils' progress, and setting targets for them to achieve. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the methods used by teachers to record their pupils' achievements. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is good, and is enriched through a wide range of out of class activities.

This is a school in which each child matters. All pupils are warmly welcomed and equally valued. The quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is satisfactory overall, with strengths in day-to-day pastoral care offset by weaknesses in the systems used to check on pupils' progress.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. This is because the educational direction provided has not yet ensured that the pupils make consistently good progress. The school has correctly identified a number of priorities for development, including the need to improve arrangements for tracking and

target-setting. The chair of governors provides excellent support to the school in helping it to improve further.

The standard of pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Pupils generally behave exceptionally well, and have good social skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers have a consistently clear focus on precisely what they intend their pupils to learn, and that there is greater consistency across the school in the way that teachers record their assessments of pupils' achievements.
- Ensure that children in the Reception year have full access to the Foundation Stage curriculum at all times.
- Ensure that systems to track pupils' progress are refined further, so that even more regular checks can be made and clear targets can be set for individual pupils to achieve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make the best progress in English. The rate of progress in mathematics is beginning to improve, reflecting the changes made in the teaching arrangements for the older pupils.

All pupils progress at the same rate, regardless of gender or ability. In many cases, pupils' achievement is affected by the weaknesses in the school's systems for setting targets for them to reach.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development underpins all aspects of school life. Cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are good at celebrating their own cultural traditions, but have less awareness of non-western customs.

Particularly noteworthy is the ecological focus currently promoted by the school council. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. This has been recognised through the 'Healthy Schools' accreditation and the recent 'Activemark' award. Pupils also show a good awareness of personal safety and the well being of others. This is clearly seen at playtime when, despite the limited space available, they play freely while at the same time showing great consideration for one another. Pupils make useful contributions to the day to day running of the school by sensibly undertaking responsible jobs, and also show a responsibility towards the wider community. For instance, pupils raise money for charities such as Barnardos and the Leprosy Mission.

Attendance rates are above the national average, and illustrate pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes towards their school. Relationships throughout the school are

excellent. Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education and for a future as life-long learners. They work well with one another, are able to organise their work independently, and have good levels of competence in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers relate well to their pupils, give clear explanations and instructions, and organise their classes effectively. There is a good climate for learning in all classes. This stems from pupils' keenness to learn and their response to teachers' skills in making lessons enjoyable.

A weakness in otherwise competent teaching is that teachers do not always give clear enough indications to pupils of what they intend them to learn. In some year groups, such as in Year 6, pupils have targets to achieve. However, these are not given a high enough profile. As a result, pupils are generally vague about what they need to do to improve. Teachers conscientiously keep records of what has been taught, but these records do not always show how well pupils learn.

Skilled classroom assistants work well in partnership with teachers and give useful help to pupils who need more individual attention. Throughout the school, the good adult-to-pupil ratios enable adjustments to be made for each individual wherever difficulties in understanding become evident.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities for its pupils. A particularly good feature is the way in which it meets the needs of pupils of different abilities and ages within the mixed-age classes. There is a strong commitment to developing pupils' creativity, recognised by the 'Artsmark' accreditation. This includes a good range of out-of-class activities such as instrumental tuition. A further noteworthy feature is the provision of French tuition. Learning in these sessions was reinforced by a recent visit to northern France by some of the older pupils.

The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, set out in their clear individual education plans, is good.

The curriculum offered in the Foundation Stage class covers all of the required areas of learning. When the nursery nurse is employed, the teacher is able to provide a good balance between activities that she directs and those chosen by the children. This is important in developing pupils' skills as independent learners. However, when the nursery nurse is not present, the teaching is more formal, to accommodate the needs of the Year 1 pupils in the class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of the school's day-to-day pastoral care is good. The procedures for child protection are secure, and pupils feel confident that there is someone to turn to if they have a problem. The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils are closely supervised, but is aware that these procedures need to be reviewed. The school provides a healthy menu for pupils at lunchtime. All pupils interviewed said that they really enjoyed their meals and liked the choices that are offered.

The school recognises that the quality of academic guidance provided for pupils needs to be improved. This is not as good as it could be because the school's systems for tracking the progress made by pupils, and setting challenging targets for each individual to achieve, are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is good capacity for future improvement. The headteacher and staff work well as a team. Together they promote an orderly and calm environment for learning. They are clearly committed to raising standards. Key priorities for improvement have been identified and are being tackled through a clear school development plan.

The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is satisfactory. The school is aware of the need to improve its systems for compiling information about pupils' progress. Recent work to improve the writing skills of gifted and talented pupils focused closely on the gains made in pupils' learning. This serves as a good model for future developments.

Governance is good. The chair of governors has a very good knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the school and provides excellent leadership for the governing body. Governors are good at holding the school to account for its actions.

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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	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	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	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	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	2

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?	2
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	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

Thank you for welcoming me and being so helpful when I came to inspect your school. I am writing to you to tell you what I think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

I think that your school is satisfactory overall, with some things that are good. I think that by the time you leave at the end of Year 6 your work is better than in most other schools. You should be proud of this.

Here are some of the things I like best about your school:

- your school is a happy place to be in Everyone is friendly and welcoming; you get on well with each other and you behave well
- your teachers work hard to make your lessons enjoyable
- the school is good at arranging lots of interesting things for you to do
- the adults in your school care for you and are there whenever you need help.

Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school want it to be even better, so this is what I have suggested:

- I would like your teachers to think about exactly what they want you to learn when they plan your lessons and make even more careful notes about how well you are getting on
- I would like the school to make sure that there is always extra help for the children in the Reception year; this would mean that they could have separate lessons instead of sometimes sharing lessons with the Year 1 children in their class
- I would also like the school to keep an even closer check on how well you are getting on, and to set you harder targets to reach, the reason for this is that I would like to see you do even better than you already are; I'm sure that you are ready for this challenge!

I hope that you have great success in the future,

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector