

St Christopher's Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123190
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	292605
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Schenk HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Parsons
Headteacher	Ms Sarah Nisbett
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Langford Lechlade GL7 3LA
Telephone number	01367 860318
Fax number	01367 860318

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Christopher's is a smaller than average school. Its pupils come from the village of Langford, by bus from a number of surrounding villages and by parental choice from the nearby town of Carterton and further afield. Many pupils start school in Reception but some transfer to the school in Year 3 from St Peter's Infant School, Alvescot. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average, at about a sixth of the national figure. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is around average. When the school was last inspected in April 2005, it was judged to have serious weaknesses.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school that rightly judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. It has a good capacity to improve and this is shown by the way in which it has successfully dealt with the concerns raised in the last report; as a result it no longer has serious weaknesses. More recently, the school identified a lack of progress in writing, which led to disappointing results in the national curriculum tests and assessments in 2006. Improvements have taken place and the pupils are now on track to attain standards that are above average at the end of both key stages. In view of their above average starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement.

A good deal of work is being done to develop a creative curriculum that makes strong links between subjects. Some further planning is needed to make sure that the pupils are able to make progress in their skills in all subjects; currently, they do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). The teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers are making increasing use of assessment to inform their plans and are helping pupils to assess for themselves how well they have got on. There are class and group targets in literacy and numeracy and the school is now well placed to involve pupils in setting individual targets. However, the teaching does not always give sufficient challenge to higher attaining pupils. There are procedures for identifying pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for giving them extra support. There are plans to have similar procedures for gifted and talented pupils.

Pupils report that behaviour has improved. It is good in some classes and satisfactory overall. A new behaviour management policy has been effective in bringing about improvement, but it is not being consistently followed by all staff. Pupils have good opportunities to put forward ideas and make a contribution to the school and the wider community.

The headteacher has led the school effectively through a difficult period in which there have been many changes of staff. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate and there are good systems for tracking pupils' progress. There have been many new initiatives and there has been some monitoring and evaluation of them but this has not been sufficiently probing to ensure consistency. The governors have given very good support and have enabled improvements to be made to the school grounds and to its resources despite financial constraints.

What the school should do to improve further

- Identify pupils with gifts and talents and find ways to support and challenge them further.
- Use ICT more effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Monitor new initiatives more fully to ensure that they are implemented consistently.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When children first come to the school at the age of four, many of them have well developed skills for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of the skilled teaching they receive and the well planned programme of appropriate activities. By the time that they go into Year 1 most of them have attained or exceeded their early learning goals.

The progress that they make in Key Stage 1 has improved this year. The school rightly identified that the results of the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2006 showed that progress in writing was inadequate. This year standards in writing have improved and pupils are on track to attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

The pupils who join the school in Year 3 generally come with above average attainments. During Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress. In 2006 results in English were relatively lower than in mathematics and science, largely because pupils did not make enough progress in their writing skills. Progress in writing has improved and pupils are on track to attain results in English, mathematics and science that are above average, representing satisfactory achievement. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is carefully tracked and they make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and know how to be healthy and stay safe. They have good opportunities for regular exercise both through physical education lessons and through a range of after school clubs. Music plays an important part in the life of the school and art is also in evidence, contributing to the pupils' cultural development. The school recognises the importance of making its pupils aware of the different cultures represented in Britain today: their cultural and spiritual development is promoted by a connection with a nearby synagogue and visits to a Hindu temple as well as strong links with the local church.

The school has worked hard to improve behaviour, though there is still further work to be done. There is an active school council that seeks the views of all pupils and works effectively to bring about improvements. Pupils have organised and run fund-raising events, an experience which has helped them to make a contribution to the community as well as to develop the skills they will need for their future economic well-being. The Easter School for Year 6 pupils was an imaginative way of helping to prepare them for the National Curriculum tests by practising their literacy and numeracy skills in real contexts, for example, when they planned a meal and bought the food and cooked it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching is satisfactory with some good features. A range of teaching styles is used effectively in every classroom; in particular, good use is made of paired discussions to enable pupils to articulate and elaborate their ideas. Teachers are improving the quality of their assessment in order to plan work that is at the right level of difficulty for the groups of pupils within their class. However, they are not consistently giving sufficient challenge to higher attaining pupils. Music and physical education benefit from specialist input.

In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 the pupils have very positive attitudes and as a result their learning is good. In Key Stage 2 their attitudes are more variable and the teaching does not always engage the active participation of all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is putting in place a revised curriculum in order to make stronger links between subjects and to increase the pupils' levels of interest. This initiative is being carefully planned to take account of the variations in numbers within year groups that result in different organisations of classes from year to year. While the developments that have taken place have been largely successful in improving learning, there is still further to go to make sure that subject specific skills are progressively developed as pupils move through the school. There are also two aspects of the curriculum that require development: ICT is not receiving sufficient emphasis and there is no explicit planning of the provision for gifted and talented pupils. French is currently taught in one class and there are plans to include it in the curriculum across the age range in the near future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for and supported. Risk assessments are carefully undertaken and a recent report from the local authority on health and safety described the school's procedures as excellent. Child protection procedures, however, are currently no more than satisfactory: the school is in the process of arranging further training for staff. Academic guidance is developing well as a result of the improvements in assessment and tracking. Pupils are gaining greater understanding of what they need to do next by their involvement in assessing their own work and that of their classmates. The writing assessment books are being used well in one class to set individual targets. A recent audit of the school's support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities drew attention to many good features but also highlighted some areas for improvement, notably the need to make targets more precise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has led the school effectively and has successfully brought about clear improvements in behaviour and progress. She currently shares responsibility for a class with a part-time teacher and this limits her ability to influence the school as a whole. There has been considerable turnover of staff in recent years and two teachers who between them held some key responsibilities left last term. Nevertheless, subject leaders have had some positive impact, though their role now needs to be extended to ensure that they have an influence throughout the age range. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and is the basis for the school development plan that is helping to consolidate and extend the improvements that have already been made. While there is a good deal of monitoring, it is not sufficiently probing to ensure that initiatives are implemented consistently.

The governing body has recently been strengthened by several new governors and now has a good range of appropriate expertise. Governors have given very good support to the school over a difficult period and are now offering suitable challenge to help the school in the next phase of its development.

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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?	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	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	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	3
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	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?	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.

Annex A

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	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

11 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Christopher's Church of England School, Lechlade, GL7 3LA

Thank you for your help when I came to visit your school. I am particularly grateful to the pupils who sat on my table at lunch and to the Year 6 pupils and the members of the school council who came to talk to me in the library.

When I asked the Year 6 pupils what has improved in the school they gave me a long list that went like this: teachers; teaching; resources; clubs; behaviour; PE; the outside. I think that they are absolutely right that these things have improved but I also think that some of them need to get even better. You can help, particularly with making sure that behaviour continues to improve. I know that the school council took a lead in improving behaviour at lunch-times and that the traffic light system is working well. I am sure that you could now all work together to make sure that behaviour is good in every lesson and at play-times.

I think that you are getting on reasonably well with your work. Before I left I met your headteacher and two of the governors to talk about ways to make things even better. I asked them to make sure that those of you that are really good in particular areas are given things to do that make you think hard and are a challenge. I also asked them to make more use of computers to add further interest and to help you all to get better at using them. Finally, I asked them to follow up new initiatives carefully to make sure they are working well and that everyone is putting them into practice.

It was lovely to see you enjoying the sunshine in your very attractive school grounds on the two beautiful days that I was with you, but don't forget that the sun can be quite fierce. A lot of you brought caps to school and then forgot to put them on before going out to play!

Best wishes

Christopher Schenk

Her Majesty's Inspector