

St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Cassington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123194
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	292606
Inspection date	4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Barnard Payne

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	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet MacDonald
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	The Green Cassington Witney OX29 4DN
Telephone number	01865 880443
Fax number	01865 880443

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Nearly all of the pupils attending this small, rural primary school are from White British backgrounds. The school is in a relatively advantaged social context. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals compared to other schools. The school has a smaller proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Peter's Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education. The headteacher's strong leadership has enabled the school to make significant progress during her first term. Following a period of instability, during which there were several changes of headteacher and significant changes in staffing, the school is now back on track and focused on raising standards and achievement. The new headteacher has earned the trust of parents, staff and governors and is bringing about the changes necessary to improve performance. A parent wrote, 'I feel more confident about all aspects of the school since the new headteacher took over.'

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The most recent assessments at the end of the Foundation Stage show that children are strong in most areas, but weaker in linking letters and sounds, reading and writing. This is now improving due to effective teaching and support. Standards fell in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 in 2007. They are now improving and most pupils are making satisfactory progress, although the school's own monitoring shows that the progress of some younger pupils is still too slow in writing and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national performance and their progress within Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. However, in some lessons, the more able pupils are not making enough progress. Writing has been the main area of underachievement across the school and is one of its key priorities for improvement.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. The teachers are committed to working as an effective team to bring about improvements. Pupils enjoy their lessons, relationships are very positive, and staff work hard to create a secure, purposeful learning environment. Teaching assistants provide good support. Teachers manage their mixed-age classes well but do not always use assessment well enough to provide suitably challenging activities for pupils that take account of different levels of ability. Work is underway to remedy this.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school, feel safe and well cared for and show a high level of consideration for one another. Their attendance is good. They contribute well to both the school and the local community and feel a strong affinity with the school's values. Most pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, enthusiastically taking part in school sports and making healthy choices in their diets. The school listens to their views and they take an active part in caring for their school environment. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. Older pupils use their key skills of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) well and are beginning to use literacy more purposefully.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school has based new initiatives on a careful analysis of its performance; while it is too early to judge their full impact there are clear signs of improvement. Teaching staff are successfully developing their own leadership and management roles and governors are now in a position to carry out their roles more effectively. The impact of strategies to improve the pace of lessons and engage pupils is already evident in classrooms. These developments show that the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception children share a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2. They settle well into school routines because adults and older pupils support them very well. They begin school with

attainment that is broadly in line with national expectations but their literacy skills are a little weaker than their skills in other areas. They make good progress because of the effective teaching they receive. Support for developing literacy skills is good. Relationships in the classroom are very positive. The children feel confident and enjoy their activities. There are appropriate opportunities for children to work in different groups with pupils in Years 1 and 2. Staff make careful observations of children's progress, which enables them to plan effectively for future learning. Communication with parents is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate and develop the work under way to raise standards in Key Stage 1 in writing and mathematics, and in writing in Key Stage 2. Ensure that its impact is seen in improved progress.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment to set suitably challenging activities for pupils.

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

Standards have fluctuated in recent years. In 2007, with a very small group of pupils, performance in national tests for Year 2 pupils dropped significantly having previously been close to the national average. Standards at the end of Year 6 improved in all subjects compared to 2006, bringing attainment broadly in line with national performance. This reflects satisfactory progress overall. The more able pupils make inconsistent progress because some activities do not demand enough of them. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because of additional support provided for them. The school's progress tracking shows that mathematics is improving, but that there is still underachievement among the younger pupils in Key Stage 1. The school has accurately identified writing as a weaker area across the school. Pupils' achievement in both reading and writing is beginning to show signs of improvement because of a sharper focus on literacy skills, careful analysis of pupils' rates of progress and the range of strategies put into place to encourage pupils to improve their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils speak highly of their school. They behave well and show very considerate attitudes towards one another. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They share the school's values, take on responsibilities and enjoy a variety of cultural activities. They feel secure because they know everyone and relationships are very positive. They have a good sense of their own and others' personal safety, for example when using equipment in the school playground. They value the partner system, where all pupils have someone they can go to at break times or go to assembly with. Pupils are happy that the school listens to their views. The school council is about to be re-launched, the 'eco committee' is active and involves pupils in monitoring the use of resources, recycling and caring for wildlife. Pupils' attendance is good. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is improving, as evident in the pace of lessons and better progress, which were areas identified by the school as weaker in the past. Pupils enjoy their lessons and most make the progress expected of them. Teachers engage pupils well and there are good examples of older pupils showing initiative, for example in planning a science investigation. Teaching assistants provide effective support and have a clear grasp of learning objectives. Staff care well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, providing a secure and supportive learning environment for all. However, teachers' planning does not consistently cater for the full range of ability within each year group by providing all pupils with achievable challenges.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory overall and good in some respects. The school meets statutory requirements and provides a good variety of learning opportunities. This includes effective use of specialist staff for arts subjects and a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is good provision for pupils' personal development. Existing curriculum planning has not led to consistent progress in recent years and has not sufficiently matched the full range of pupils' capabilities. The school is developing a more thematic approach to its curriculum in order to meet pupils' needs more effectively. The school is also focusing on improving its provision to help pupils understand Britain as a diverse society.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The family atmosphere of this small school ensures that adults know pupils well. The school provides a good level of care and the arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all requirements. Parents and carers value this aspect of the school highly, including parents of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. One parent commented on 'reliable, caring teachers who are approachable by children and parents.' Older pupils reflect the model of care promoted by the school and show genuine care and concern for younger children. Pupils feel well informed about their progress and value teachers' marking and comments. The school has recognised the need to sharpen the academic guidance pupils receive. It has recently introduced a rigorous system of progress tracking and this is already raising pupils' awareness of how they are doing and where they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has recently introduced a range of strategies to improve performance but these have yet to lead to sustained improvement. The new headteacher has successfully identified development priorities that focus on raising standards. Her strong leadership has enabled her to involve staff and governors in initiatives designed to bring about school improvement. This includes drawing up a clear, well-structured plan and reshaping governing body committees to enable governors to play a more effective

part in the strategic development of the school. The headteacher has very effective communication skills and has rapidly gained the confidence of all those connected with the school. Staff, governors and parents share her vision. Accurate analysis of performance data forms the basis of the school's improvement strategies. A much sharper focus on target setting and assessment is beginning to raise expectations and improve the quality of pupils' work. Monitoring is now regular and increasingly focused on priorities. The headteacher is developing leadership capacity through her work with teachers, who are rapidly developing their monitoring and evaluation roles. The full impact of these leadership initiatives has yet to be seen. Governors are committed to school improvement and are now better informed and more involved in the strategic management of the school.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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

17 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Cassington, Witney, OX29 4DN

On behalf of your inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your lives at St Peter's. We were particularly impressed with how well you care for one another and we know that this is something you really value about your school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and it is improving. We agree with you that the school is a caring place in which you feel safe and happy. Adults in the school work hard to look after everyone. You also play a major part in this by behaving well, showing consideration for others and showing a willingness to take responsibility. The school has been through a difficult time with changes in headteacher and other staff. You now have a new headteacher who has put the school back on track and is bringing about rapid improvements. We know you work hard in lessons, but we also know that you could achieve more, particularly in writing.

We have asked the school to focus on improving your progress in writing across the school and the younger pupils' mathematics. We have also asked the school to make sure that you all have suitably challenging activities in lessons. You can help your teachers achieve this by making sure you know what you need to do to improve your writing and mathematics. You can also help by being clear about your own personal objectives in class.

Yours sincerely

Barnard Payne

Lead Inspector