

Dr Radcliffe's Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123210
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	292612
Inspection date	22 March 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	190
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Boote
Headteacher	Mrs P A Heptonstall
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001
School address	Fir Lane Steeple Aston Bicester OX25 4SF
Telephone number	01869 340204
Fax number	01869 340204

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Dr Radcliffe's School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school of just under average size. It was founded in 1640 by Dr Samuel Radcliffe who was the Rector of Steeple Aston and the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and there are no pupils whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, at just under half the national figure. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is also below average, again at about half the national figure.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'My children are developing into well-rounded, caring individuals as well as making excellent academic progress.' This comment, typical of the overwhelmingly positive response by parents to a questionnaire sent out at the time of the inspection, encapsulates what makes the school outstanding. It is the combination of the academic progress, which is indeed excellent, with the wide range of cultural and creative opportunities and the strongly positive ethos that enables the pupils to grow into mature and sensitive young people.

For several years the results of National Curriculum assessments and tests have been above or well above average. These good results have not made the school complacent. Last year there was a relative weakness in the test results in English in Year 6. The school analysed the results carefully and compared them with the much better results of the year before and came to the conclusion that what made the difference in 2005 was the depth and breadth of the pupils' reading, which had a beneficial effect on their writing skills. Working together, teachers across the school have widened and enriched the reading diet and this has already led to measurable improvement in pupils' writing skills at all ages. The depth and range of the pupils' work is particularly impressive in the Year 5 and Year 6 classes. The pupils' high achievements in their last two years of primary school are made possible by the solid foundations that are put in place during their first five years.

High standards in English, mathematics and science are not achieved at the expense of other areas. All the subjects that are required to be taught, together with modern foreign languages, are given appropriate emphasis in an outstandingly well planned curriculum that exploits the links between subjects and promotes creativity and enjoyment. A recent focus on developing the staff's confidence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has led to its widespread and effective use. The pupils achieve very well indeed across the curriculum; this is particularly evident in music, drama, art and physical education. They benefit from a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs that make a very strong contribution to their social and cultural development. They appreciate their own cultural heritages and learn to understand and respect cultures other than their own.

The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are outstandingly good. The children learn well through activity and first-hand experience and from the rhythms of the daily routines. The school has identified the need to make sure that the work in Year 1 builds on the good practice in the Reception class; one of the current focuses of the school development plan is to improve the transition between them. Overall, the teaching in the school is outstandingly effective. The excellent relationships lead to the pupils having very positive attitudes to learning. Frequent assessments of the pupils' progress are well used to inform the planning, which takes good account of the different levels of attainment within each class. The particular gifts and talents of individual pupils are identified so that they can be given the extra support and challenge that they need. Learning difficulties are carefully diagnosed and specific individual targets are set. Teaching assistants play an important part in the teaching, the assessment and the recording of progress.

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The senior leadership team, the rest of the staff and the governors all work together with a shared commitment to continuous improvement. The school's excellent track record, in identifying areas of relative weakness and

taking simple and effective steps to bring about improvement, demonstrates its outstanding capacity to continue to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the well-conceived school development plan, which is regularly reviewed by staff and governors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children in the Foundation Stage make a very good start and their progress continues to be good in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, they reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They have consistently done so for the last four years and further improvements have also been made as a result of specific initiatives. For example, the proportion reaching the higher level in writing increased significantly in 2006 and the present Year 2 pupils are on track to continue this improvement.

Progress in Key Stage 2 is particularly good. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average, though there was a relative weakness in English in 2006. The standards of the present Year 6 pupils are well above average in English, mathematics and science showing outstanding progress and achievement.

The school keeps careful track of the progress of individuals and groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their specific targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' cultural development is outstanding because of the rich opportunities they have in art, literature, drama, sport and music. They learn about other cultures in different parts of the world, enhanced by the school's participation in two Comenius projects. They also learn about the multi-cultural nature of British society. On the day of the inspection Years 5 and 6 spent the morning visiting a local mosque. Pupils are given a wide range of responsibilities, particularly in Year 6, that have a very beneficial effect on their social and moral development. There is an active school council that has made improvements, for example through introducing a house system. The relationships between adults and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, are outstandingly good. As one Year 6 pupil remarked, 'The children pay respect to the teachers and do what they ask. The teachers treat us with as much respect as we treat them.'

The pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. They put this into practice by making sensible choices from the wide range of tasty and nutritious alternatives available at lunch-time and by participating enthusiastically in physical education lessons and sporting clubs. Their enjoyment of school is very evident and is reflected in the excellent attendance of nearly all the pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

'The teaching methods are very interactive. The teachers don't just ramble on but they explain and help you if things don't make sense...you have to admire their enthusiasm and their ability

to keep trying to help you to learn.' The comments of some Year 6 pupils describe the style of teaching that is consistently found throughout the school. There is a particular emphasis given to encouraging pupils to be adventurous, take risks and learn from their mistakes. As the Year 2 teacher said to her class, 'It's good to get things wrong sometimes because it makes you think harder.' The teaching assistants make a particularly valuable contribution. They teach individuals and small groups, under the overall direction of the class teachers, and they make assessments and record their observations. At times, the dialogue between the teacher and the assistant is lively, amusing and helps to engage the pupils' interest.

Because the pupils' attitudes to learning are so positive, the excellent teaching that they receive leads to outstandingly good learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The pupils are given a broad range of interesting things to learn about and creative things to do. Because the curriculum is carefully planned, there is a clear focus on the pupils' progress in the key skills of speaking and listening, literacy, numeracy, ICT and team-work. The organisation and time-tabling are flexible. For example, the pupils in Years 5 and 6 are regrouped once a week for literacy and mathematics so that they can be taught in smaller groups of about the same attainment level. There are also times when the normal timetable is suspended to enable work in greater depth to take place in a particular subject, for example, during the recent design and technology week. Two local secondary schools, with specialisms in sport and technology, have provided expertise to supplement the extensive range of subject knowledge among the school's own staff.

There is an exceptionally good range of clubs, offering particularly good opportunities in music and sport. They are greatly valued by parents and pupils. As one of them said, 'There are many extra things that the teachers do in their own time that show that they care and they seem to have fun.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pupils are looked after and cared for exceptionally well. Child protection procedures are fully in place and the safety and welfare of the pupils is carefully considered in all activities. A recent review of the security of the school has led to improvements, for example the fitting of a high handle on the door of the Reception class. Academic guidance is very good. The pupils know their targets and value the guidance they are given on how to reach them. The small numbers of pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern, or who have difficulty in behaving appropriately, are very well supported indeed. The rare instances of bullying are recorded, followed up and generally resolved speedily. As one pupil said, 'If there is any bullying, it gets sorted out. Teachers know how to resolve these things. I don't know how they do it, but they manage it.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has resulted in a shared commitment from all staff to the continuing improvement of the quality of care and education, and to the full

inclusion of all pupils. She receives excellent support from the deputy head, the key stage leaders and the subject leaders. The staff work very well together and are open to suggestions and willing to share their expertise. The governors play a very full role in the life of the school, which is continuing to develop, and enables them to make an outstanding contribution.

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when I visited your school. I am grateful to those of you who sat on my table when I was having lunch and to those who met me after lunch for the things that you told me about your school.

I think you go to an outstandingly good school. I am impressed by how well you look after each other, how ready you are to learn and how much you enjoy what you do. I think you are very diligent and if you don't know what that means then ask the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils who were looking it up in the dictionary in one of the lessons that I visited.

You really appreciate your teachers and the other adults in the school. Here are some of the things that you said about them: 'The teachers help you to learn loads.' 'They give up their time for choir and orchestra and all sorts.' 'They are always up to having fun.' 'If you don't understand something, they help you and you're not afraid to speak up.' 'There's always someone there to help you if you get stuck or hurt yourself.'

I think you are absolutely right that the adults in the school look after you very well indeed and help you to learn. You do a lot of exciting and interesting things. You are getting on very well in your English, mathematics and science and also in many other subjects. You have good opportunities to be creative in art, music, dance and drama and to take healthy exercise in PE and sports.

Your headteacher, the rest of the staff and the governors are always on the look out for ways to make your school even better. They are good at deciding what they need to do next so I have encouraged them to carry on with the improvements they have planned. You will help them by continuing to be diligent and enthusiastic.

Christopher Schenk

Her Majesty's Inspector