



St Martin's CofE Aided Infant School, Epsom

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125157
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293211
Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Gray

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Worple Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Epsom
Age range of pupils	4–7		KT18 7AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01372 720337
Number on roll (school)	179	Fax number	01372 739567
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Morgan
		Headteacher	Mrs L Hutchings
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006	Inspection number 293211
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language. There is a higher percentage than average of pupils with statements of educational need. In recent years, the school has had to cope with a number of staff absences owing to maternity leave and medical treatment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school gives a satisfactory standard of education. Pupils reach average standards by the time they leave in Year 2. This represents satisfactory achievement and provides a sound basis for future learning.

The school made good progress after the last inspection. It solved the staffing problems it then faced and standards began to rise. They reached above average levels for a number of years, but, over the last two years, staff absences for medical reasons have led to changes of teacher and a lack of consistency in its quality. As a result, standards are not as high as previously and pupils' progress is satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school well throughout this period, with a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses, but the effectiveness of management has been impeded by staff absences. Some subject leaders have thus been unable to take sufficient responsibility for their areas. The school recognises this because it is very frank and searching in its self-analysis. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, enabling children to make satisfactory progress towards the goals expected of them. Children start school with skills that are similar to those found among most four-year-olds, though their social skills are a little lower. A number find it difficult to share. Some talk loudly and forget to listen to others. This tendency has been increasing in recent years and the school has arranged training for staff to help them counteract it.

These habits remain with some children throughout their time in school. This means that, while most pupils work hard and know how to behave, there are some lessons where the atmosphere is too noisy. This sometimes slows down pupils' work. Pupils' personal development and well being are satisfactory. Strong aspects are their enjoyment of school, their understanding of religious ideas and their knowledge and practice of healthy life styles. One boy explained what a 'balanced diet' is: 'It means you eat everything but not too much of one thing. You shouldn't even eat too much fruit and vegetables.' Pupils love making a contribution to the school through the school council.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Teachers make lessons interesting and help pupils to enjoy their learning. The school needs more computers in order to give pupils greater opportunities to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school gives its pupils good standards of care and welfare and includes all pupils equally in its work. One parent wrote, 'Well managed, happy, caring school that benefits the children'. Support is not always directed at those who most need it because, until this term, systems of assessment were not sufficiently comprehensive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable subject leaders to take more responsibility for their subjects, especially in making greater use of assessment to direct support effectively.
- Increase the number of computers available for pupils' use in order to give them more opportunities to use their ICT skills and so reach higher standards.
- Provide staff with training to help them develop pupils' social skills and aptitude for learning, especially when they first start school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2, standards are average. In 2006, assessment information shows that many higher attaining pupils progressed well. Most pupils made the progress expected of them, including pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Lower attaining pupils, whose abilities are nonetheless sufficient for them not to be identified as having 'special needs', did not all reach their targets. The number is not large, but the school identified that, with more accurate assessment at the end of reception and more effective support, some of these pupils might have reached the expected level. Pupils reach expected levels in ICT, but need more opportunities to use computers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with strengths in spiritual and cultural development. One pupil said, 'God lives in the spirit' and explained what this means: 'When you die, you join heaven in the orange glow of sunlight.' Pupils are very clear that no single faith can be called 'correct'. Such comments show that pupils have a mature ability to express themselves. The school has focused on speaking skills over the last year and this has been effective.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, though some are noisy in lessons and round the school. One girl told an inspector 'I don't like playtimes because they are so noisy. I just want to rest.'

Pupils show much enjoyment of school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They say that they feel safe from bullying and that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns. School councillors believe they are helping to make the school a better place. Pupils know which foods and physical activities will keep them healthy. Their basic skills in English, mathematics and ICT give them a satisfactory basis for future learning, though their lack of easy access to computers restricts this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan well together so that pupils in different classes in the same year group receive a consistent curriculum. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to make learning interesting, and pupils learn to use them too, as when two Year 2 girls 'drew' an autumn leaf and stood back to judge the effect of the colouring.

Marking is of good quality and shows pupils how they can make their work better. One teacher wrote in a pupil's English book, 'Your middle section is a bit short - this should be the longest section'. Comments such as this help explain why many pupils are able to reach high levels in writing.

Teachers are not consistent in the way they establish a quiet working atmosphere, and the school has recognised this as a point for development. Teaching assistants give good support to groups of pupils, but it is not always aimed at the right levels because systems of assessment have hitherto lacked rigour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets the needs of most pupils and is well enriched. One class were learning about Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, and were shown a video clip from The Charge of the Light Brigade to help them understand the ferocity of fighting in the Crimea. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

The school does not have enough computers. Most classes have access to only two machines, so that, when new skills are taught, pupils may have to wait till later in the week to practise them. This restricts the number of occasions when the machines are available for use in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Effective systems ensure that the school environment is safe and welcoming. Child protection arrangements are thorough and staff training up to date. There are many initiatives which help develop pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well organised. Good use is made of outside agencies to evaluate pupils' needs and provide support and guidance to pupils and staff. Vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and supported effectively. The few pupils whose first language is not English are appropriately supported.

The academic guidance given to pupils is satisfactory. Assessment is used at the end of each year to check pupils' progress. The school has extended the tracking of the progress, to include all pupils during the course of the year, so that staff are now in

a better position to evaluate progress rigorously and direct support effectively to where it is most needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior management team have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school. They have dealt effectively with the large number of key issues from the last inspection.

The school has also coped with the additional pressures of long-term absence of staff and the reduction in the number of pupils on roll. This has led to changes of staff and middle management and has restricted the school's capacity to improve, which is currently satisfactory. The headteacher's evaluation of the school is good, but the effectiveness of self-evaluation is satisfactory, because subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in developing their subjects. The school has identified the need to extend their leadership role, especially in the collation of assessment data.

Parents are happy with the school and its leadership. Partnerships with other schools are good and promote smooth transition between phases. The governing body is well led by a knowledgeable chair. Governors are committed and supportive of the school's leadership. Many are new and are still developing their involvement in the evaluation of the school's work.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	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	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

Dear Pupils

We enjoyed our visit to your school. You were friendly and polite and we want to thank you for making us so welcome.

One of the things we liked best was how good so many of you are at explaining your feelings and thoughts. You are keen on keeping healthy and enjoy taking exercise. Your school lunches help you eat a balanced diet.

Most of you behave well, but some of you spoil it sometimes by being too noisy. This happens in class, round the school and even in the playground. The best behaviour we saw was in assemblies. We have asked the school to help some of you be calmer and quieter. It is important that you try to remember what your teachers tell you.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT, though you do not have enough chances to use computers, because the school does not have enough. This is another thing we have asked the school to do, to buy more computers for you to use often.

Your headteacher does a good job and all the adults help her. We have asked them to make closer checks on how well you are learning, to make sure that you are all doing as well as you can.

We wish you well with your future learning.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead inspector