

Theale Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109980
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	310162
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Myers
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Morley
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Church Street Theale Reading RG7 5BZ
Telephone number	01189 302239
Fax number	01189 304232

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is an average size primary school serving principally the village of Theale on the outskirts of Reading. Pupils come from generally economically secure backgrounds and most are white British. Attached to the school are two, well-respected special units. One is for autistic children and the other is for children from 26 different schools in the area who come for language and literacy lessons.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality education for its pupils. Although the school's test results in recent years have been average to below average, the arrival of a new headteacher and the subsequent considerable changes in ethos, school environment and the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in current standards being higher. Pupils are making good progress with standards hovering between average and above average.

Pupils' personal development is good. They grow in confidence and understand themselves and others better as they grow older. They work well together. Their behaviour is very good; the school provides a calm and pleasant environment for learning. Pupils hold very clear views of what is right and wrong. Many aspects of pupils' cultural development are good but their understanding of other cultures in the United Kingdom is less secure. Attendance is average. Pupils contribute effectively to the school and wider community. In school, this is most notably through the school council and the 'buddy' schemes.

All staff are very keen for pupils to do well and this contributes strongly to the good quality teaching, learning and curriculum. Pupils are keen to learn, supported by the good environment, resources and ethos. Teaching is well-informed by good marking and assessment information about how well pupils are doing but this is not shared effectively enough with pupils. Although there is some variability in quality, lessons are generally well taught. Teaching assistants are very helpful. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well served in the units and school as a whole although not enough is done to stretch and support more able pupils. The curriculum focuses appropriately on English, mathematics and science but also provides rich experiences in other subjects. The recent revival of the arts in school is a noteworthy feature capable of yet further development. The knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils are gaining will contribute well to their next stage of education and their future well-being.

The school's leadership and management at all levels are highly effective. An ethos that encourages learning has now been firmly established, the environment improved, and clear expectations about standards and progress agreed. Equally, there are clear expectations about helping pupils develop personally. The school's managers are not complacent; they are monitoring well and have appropriate plans for further development. There has been significant recent improvement since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to improve further.

There was a good number of responses from parents to the Ofsted questionnaire. Though a range of issues, both positive and negative, were raised, the overwhelming view was to express satisfaction that there is now a stable and successful management, and happiness with the education provided.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery class with a range of skills which is typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. They learn through practical and fun activities. They learn quickly to choose from a good range of activities and, with sensitive guidance from adults, challenge themselves to do their best. Detailed records of children's progress, and a flexible approach to using resources in both the Reception and Nursery classes, ensure that the learning needs of all children are suitably met. The children's outdoor experiences are

satisfactory but are limited by the lack of an appropriately designed area that would ensure more opportunity for creative activities. Teaching is satisfactory. There is a good mix of directed and self-chosen activities to interest children. Whilst free play activities in class are valued, not enough is done to ensure that these are highly motivating and contribute fully to children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Address the variability in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Involve pupils more in the use of assessment information - particularly in relation to targets as part of the school's efforts to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the outdoor facilities for Foundation Stage children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards that are typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress so that by the time they start in Year 1 standards are average in their academic work and above average in their personal development.

In the past few years, standards by the end of Key Stage 1 slipped to below average. However, changes made since the arrival of the new headteacher mean that they are now at least average and often better than this. Pupils are now making good progress particularly in writing.

In the past few years, standards by the end of Key Stage 2 have been consistently average and pupils have made satisfactory progress. However, current evidence is that pupils are now making good progress because of the new initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Standards are now between average and above average. Significant recent improvement in pupils' progress has been made in writing, reading and mathematics although there remain weaknesses in their knowledge of number facts such as multiplication tables and number bonds. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality of the support provided. More able pupils do reasonably well in class because of the way teachers provide challenges of greater complexity. However, not enough is done to support and develop this group of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They are polite and exceptionally well behaved. They are not worried about bullying and know who to ask if there are any difficulties. Members of the school council work effectively for the benefit of the school. Pupils support others in the community; for example, by distributing gifts from harvest festival and collecting toys to send to Africa.

Pupils grow in self-confidence and understanding of themselves and others. School assemblies celebrate the Christian ethos providing a high quality spiritual and moral experience and pupils respond well. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural issues is good; for example, Year 2's study of the feelings behind Picasso's paintings and whole-school interest in the works of Holst. There is study of other world cultures but pupils' understanding of different cultures in the United Kingdom is not strong enough. Pupils understand the requirements for healthy living but the take-up of school meals is low; the type of food served, its presentation, and the

organisation of the dining hall warrants review. Attendance is satisfactory; the school is trying hard to overcome the problems presented by a small number of pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. At its heart are the strict guidelines set down by the new headteacher with the support of staff to ensure clear objectives and high expectations. The headteacher, staff and pupils have established a very real ethos that learning is worthwhile, interesting and fun. There are variations in the quality of teaching but the school's senior managers are aware of this and are providing guidance and support where necessary. Teaching assistants are well deployed as are qualified teachers who provide specialist help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. Appropriate emphasis is given to English, mathematics and science and within these subjects, areas that were previously of relative weakness; for example, reading and writing. Good use is made of phonics. Other subjects are well represented; for example, information and communications technology is well used by other subjects and history and geography support pupils' literacy development. Until recently, art and music have been undervalued. The recent revival of these subjects linked to activities such as the high-quality choir deserves even further development. The school is keeping the curriculum under review to address needs and keep it relevant.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Quality is very evident both in class and in the wide range of other services offered to pupils in the main school and in the attached units for autism and language and literacy. There are strong links with professionals outside of school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported and guided. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and there is effective risk assessment. The school's personal, social, and health education programme is effective. The improved systems for marking and monitoring pupils' academic performance are rigorous and have already had a big impact. Appropriate targets are set although they are not yet shared sufficiently with pupils. Assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is not well enough developed so that progress is difficult to measure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has revitalised the school, giving teachers and other adult members of the school the guidance and support to work to the best of their capability. They feel motivated and enthused by their responsibilities. The senior leadership as a whole knows the school well so that planning for improvement is focused accurately. Assessment and other data are used effectively although occasionally some analysis is inaccurate. The skills of staff have been

accurately evaluated and changes in deployment successfully blend experience and enthusiasm. Subject coordinators are fully involved in monitoring provision in their subjects and strong team working is one of the catalysts for the recent rapid improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and are fully involved in monitoring performance.

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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?	2
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
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?	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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Theale Church of England Primary School, Reading, RG7 5BZ

As you know, we recently inspected your school. We met many of you in class, in formal meetings with some of you and by attending activities such as assembly and choir practice. We are very grateful for the help that you gave us. You are your school's 'customers' and therefore, your opinions are very important.

We were very impressed by the efforts that you and your teachers are making to ensure that you do well. In the past few years, pupils in your school have not been doing as well as they should have been doing. Now, however, with your new headteacher and the support of all staff, you are making good progress.

We were impressed with the atmosphere in your school. It is a nice place for you to work and we are pleased that you are all keen to learn. Your lessons are mostly good and teachers want you to do well. So, it is your job to work with them and to take more responsibility for your learning. You need to ask your teachers when you need help or when you think you would like to do something challenging - for example, for homework. I know your teachers will respond positively.

Your headteacher, the governors and other staff have good plans for future to help everyone do better. We have picked out three developments that we think are the most important. They are to do with:

- making sure that teaching and learning are always of the best quality;
- asking you to take more responsibility for your own learning which will help you as you grow up; and
- improving the outdoor facilities for Foundation Stage children which will help their learning.

Once again, my thanks for your help and my very best wishes for the future.

Paul Armitage

Her Majesty's Inspector