

# North Marston Church of England School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110412
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310292
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steven Hill

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	102
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Gouldstone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	School Hill North Marston Buckingham MK18 3PE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 670286
<b>Fax number</b>	01296 670286

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' personal development; the progress that pupils make, particularly in writing; the quality of teaching and the impact of the recent disruption to staffing; and how well the school monitors its own performance and takes steps to address issues that arise.

Evidence was gathered through observing lessons and break-times; discussions with staff, pupils and the chair of governors; questionnaires returned by parents; the results of national assessments and the school's own documentation, particularly in tracking pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This small school provides education for children from two villages. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage, and all are fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, but few pupils have high levels of need. The most common needs are moderate learning difficulties, often pupils who struggle to some extent with literacy or numeracy. There has been extensive staffing turnover in the last two years, including the sudden death of the assistant headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy both work and play. Pupils achieve well from their overall above-average starting points. The good progress they make throughout the school means that standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have been exceptionally high for several years. Inspection also showed evidence of high standards in art and in singing.

The key to pupils' good progress is good teaching. This has been maintained despite significant disruption to staffing in the last two years. The changes particularly affected the current Year 5 and 6 class, although these pupils' books show that they are nonetheless maintaining high standards in their work. Teachers manage classes well, building on high expectations of work and behaviour, and very positive relationships with pupils. Pupils in Year 6 agreed that among the best things about the school are that teachers '...make learning fun,' and '...if you are stuck, they will always help you.' Teachers have a good understanding of each pupil's progress, and plan different tasks to match their different needs. Good use is made of the skilled teaching assistants, particularly to help pupils who might otherwise struggle with literacy and numeracy to achieve well. Teachers give pupils written targets for English and mathematics, which they keep in their books. However, these are not always very 'child-friendly' and the school is currently working to improve them. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously, but their comments do not consistently refer to pupils' targets, or show them how they can improve their work in future.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their high levels of attendance and their excellent behaviour. They work hard in class and are keen to succeed. They have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They say that bullying is very rare, and they have confidence that the adults in school deal firmly with any unacceptable behaviour. Older pupils take a pride in the responsibilities they take up around the school, particularly in helping younger children, and the positive contribution they make to the school community through the school council. They are keen on sport and exercise, and pupils in Year 6 are pleased about the increased opportunities they now have for sport. They have a strong sense of fairness, explaining why sporting opportunities are open to all and not just those who are very good. They understand about healthy diets, and they told the inspector that most of them eat sensibly, even though they still enjoy chocolate!

Pupils' positive attitudes are underpinned by the good care, guidance and support that the school provides. Academic progress is tracked well, based on assessment systems that are much improved since the last inspection. Pastoral care remains an important strength so that pupils feel happy and safe in school, right from their start in Reception. The school has good links with parents, and staff and governors are keen to build on these further. Parents are very supportive of the school and are generally very positive about its work. A minority, however, expressed concerns about the disruption to staffing and the impact on pupils in Years 5 and 6 in the last year. In particular, they queried the delay in appointing a permanent class teacher, and the variety of teachers that taught this class in the interim. Inspection evidence shows that the governors and headteacher did everything possible to provide good teaching to the class at this time. The pupils themselves are positive about the variety of staff who taught them, one saying 'It worked for us.' They explained very maturely to the inspector that they enjoyed the different subject strengths that different teachers brought to lessons, likening the experience to a 'practice' for secondary school.

The school provides a good curriculum that covers all the subjects well. Staff are currently working effectively to expand the links made between different subjects, to make learning more creative. There is good enrichment provided by a variety of visits and visitors, and there is a good range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs for such a small school. Recent training in physical education has increased teachers' confidence in the range of activities they can provide. French teaching adds to the experiences of Key Stage 2 pupils, making good use of specialist support from another local primary school. Similarly, input on science from a local secondary school enlivens the curriculum and generates a lot of enthusiasm from pupils.

Good leadership and management, and good teamwork from a staff led expertly by the headteacher, have helped the school to improve since the last inspection, despite recent difficulties. Good self-evaluation is based on careful tracking of pupils' achievement, with the provision of extra help to any who do not make the progress they should. In addition, staff modify the curriculum to address any more general issues. For example, a recent downturn in older pupils' writing progress is being tackled successfully, and almost all the current Year 6 are now on course to meet the challenging targets set for them. The regular monitoring of lessons by the headteacher, and clear feedback to colleagues on strengths and weaknesses, have supported the continued good teaching. The contribution of subject leaders to improving practice and progress has increased considerably since the last inspection. However, they have little opportunity to share their expertise by working alongside each other in the classroom. The school has plans to address this. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and hold it to account well.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Good provision ensures that children make good progress in the Reception class. Good teaching and an interesting curriculum lead to most children reaching the expected levels by the time they go into Year 1, and many exceed them. They are given things to do that enthuse and interest them, and that are matched well to their individual needs. As a result, they enjoy school and quickly feel at home in the classroom. The class has no dedicated outside area, but staff make good use of communal outside facilities to promote children's learning. Work outside is linked well to themes in the classroom. For example, mathematical work in class on giving directions was extended when children gave directions to their classmates who were riding tricycles outside. However, the lack of any covered outside area still limits provision when the weather is bad.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Give subject leaders opportunities to share expertise by working alongside each other in the classroom.
- Ensure that marking more consistently evaluates pupils' work against their targets, and shows them how they can improve.
- Improve the outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage, as funds permit, by providing an area that can be used in bad weather.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

### 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

08 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Marston Church of England School, Buckingham, MK18 3PE

Thank you very much for your welcome and your help when I visited your school. I enjoyed seeing your lessons and talking to you. You told me that North Marston is a good school, and I agree. It is helping you to grow up into sensible, happy and caring young people, who are a credit to your school and your parents.

I was particularly impressed by how well you all get on with each other, and with the adults. Your behaviour is excellent and you really seem to enjoy school. I like the way that the older pupils try to help the younger ones.

You are making good progress in your work because your teachers are good at helping you to learn. By the end of Year 6, you reach very high standards. You have interesting things to do, and I know you enjoy all the exercise and sport that the school provides. You work hard to reach your targets, and I have asked the teachers to give you some more ideas how to reach them, when they mark your work.

The headteacher and the other adults organise the school well, and they try hard to help each other with their teaching. I have asked the headteacher to give teachers more opportunities to work together in each other's classrooms, so that they can help you to learn even more.

The Reception class gives children a really good start to school life, and the older pupils play their part in this by helping to take care of them. The children really enjoy working and playing outdoors, and I have agreed with the adults that they will try to provide a covered area, so they can still do this even when it rains.

I hope you carry on enjoying school. The adults are keen to make it even better, and I know that you will help by working hard, trying to reach your targets, and looking after each other.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill

Lead Inspector