

The Gerrards Cross Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110436
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310302
Inspection date	9 December 2008
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	401
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Babb
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Flower
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Moreland Drive Gerrards Cross SL9 8BD
Telephone number	01753 882 731
Fax number	01753 892 872

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas: personal development and well-being; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management. In particular the inspection focused on pupils' understanding of health, safety and the wider world, and their enjoyment. It also looked into the quality of academic support and guidance given to pupils. Achievement and standards, teaching and learning, and the curriculum were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments are not justified, and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

The Gerrards Cross Church of England School is larger than average. It has an above-average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, most of whom are of Indian origin. The proportion whose first language is not English is below average. It has average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the majority of these have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises two Reception classes. The school has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Gerrards Cross Church of England School provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils. The consistently high quality of its provision enables pupils to achieve outstandingly well. At the same time, they enjoy school life very much and have excellent opportunities to mature and develop skills which prepare them well for the future. Parents happily acknowledge the school's numerous strengths and are extremely complementary about the headteacher and staff. One typical comment was about 'fantastic caring and supportive staff who nurture our children with steadfast dedication'.

At the heart of these qualities lies the outstanding leadership and management of the school. The headteacher knows the school and its pupils very well and is closely involved in many aspects of school life, for example, leading and inspiring the choir to sing beautifully in their rehearsals for the Christmas concert. The headteacher shares her vision for the school with staff and governors, who work closely together to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils. Systematic monitoring enables the school to promote best practice and also to identify areas for improvement early. Clear and effective long-term planning accurately identifies priorities and enables the school to continue to move forwards. The school's improvement since the previous inspection and its capacity for continuing improvement is thus outstanding. Governors are knowledgeable, supporting and challenging the school appropriately. Their understanding of financial management is strong and governors work very hard to enable the school to provide outstanding value for money from its limited budget. The school has constructive local, national and international links, including supporting a very poor school in Uganda, and its contribution to community cohesion is exceptional.

'We are all encouraged and inspired to follow our dreams', said one pupil and this is typical of pupils' views of the school and one reason why their personal development and well-being is outstanding. Pupils enjoy all that the school offers and are inspired by the wide range of activities available to them. Attendance is above average. Pupils have very positive relationships with staff and other pupils and are inspired to learn. Their very positive attitudes have a significant impact on their achievement. They demonstrate high levels of independence and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils' awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles and stay safe is excellent. The development of pupils' future economic well-being is similarly strong. This has improved since the previous inspection, especially because facilities and planning to develop pupils' understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) have developed considerably. The school council represents the views of the pupils very effectively and the pupils' keen involvement reflects the importance they attach, not only to school but also to wider community and global issues. This enthusiasm also contributes towards the pupils' outstanding spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness and development.

Teaching is consistently excellent, so pupils' learning is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting activities, such as budgeting for Christmas shopping, and these engage pupils' interest. Planning fully takes into account the various learning needs of individuals, and teaching assistants are effectively deployed to help those who may be having difficulty. Simultaneously, the more able are kept at full stretch by challenging questioning and more demanding activities. Pupils revel in the plentiful opportunities to work independently, in pairs and teams, and their attitudes to learning are outstanding.

The effects of such interesting lessons are evident in pupils' achievement. Children start at school with higher-than-expected skills, but achieve outstandingly well in the EYFS and join Year 1 with well above-average standards. This exceptionally high attainment is maintained across the school. It is evident in the well above-average standards which are consistently reached in all subject areas in assessments at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Challenging teaching ensures that the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in these assessments is also consistently well above average. Pupils' achievement, including those pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, is outstanding.

The curriculum is rich and varied. Effective planning ensures that subjects are combined in stimulating ways, but still meet all requirements. Special events, such as science week and health awareness week, provide pupils with interesting learning experiences. Visitors from a wide variety of backgrounds, such as a South African band, help broaden pupils' understanding of both local and global issues. The wide range of after school clubs, including many sports, together with chess and gardening, are spoken of with great enthusiasm by pupils, are well attended and enrich their experiences. Trips and visits, including a residential trip for Year 6 pupils, also effectively broaden pupils' horizons.

The high level of care provided by staff ensures that pupils feel safe and ready to learn. Systems to check on the suitability of adults to work with children are extremely robust. A careful check is made to assess the risk in all activities and visits out of school. Procedures to protect children, including those who are potentially vulnerable, are excellent. Pupils receive very clear guidance on the quality of their work and how to improve it. Marking is regular and usually offers good advice on the next steps for learning. Pupils receive simple, personal targets. However, the school acknowledges that these are more precise in English than in mathematics and has plans to improve the latter.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision for EYFS is outstanding. Parents talk very positively about their children's first experiences of school. They feel that the children are 'exceptionally well cared for and grow in confidence thanks to the care and gentle encouragement of the staff'. The majority of children start school with skills above those expected and their achievement in the Reception class is outstanding. They benefit from excellent teaching and additional adult support, in an inspiring, welcoming and well-planned environment that stimulates their learning. All staff have excellent relationships with the children and ensure that their emotional well-being is paramount at all times. While working on a topic about Christmas, children clearly enjoyed applying their counting skills to the number of baubles on the Christmas tree as well as developing skills across the full range of early learning experiences, both indoor and outdoor.

The school is aware that outdoor facilities require improvement - for example, there is no roof to the play area so it cannot be used in inclement weather - but staff plan well to work around this issue and it does not unduly affect the quality of learning. Staff use assessment information very carefully to plan next steps in children's learning, to ensure excellent progress. The leadership and management of EYFS is outstanding, maintaining and developing the best possible practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve outdoor facilities for the children in the EYFS.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

19 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Gerrards Cross Church of England School, Gerrards Cross, SL9 8BD

Thank you for being so helpful to the inspectors when we visited your school. It was very good to meet and chat with you. You told us how much you like school with its enjoyable lessons and good teachers. We agree! Gerrards Cross is an outstanding school.

Teaching is excellent and lessons are usually very interesting. Teachers plan carefully to make sure no one falls behind. You do your bit by working very hard, and your behaviour is excellent. Well done! All these strengths mean that you achieve very well and your standards across the school are well above those seen in most schools in England. The subjects and topics you study (called the curriculum) are well chosen and enlivened by visitors and special events, so this area is excellent.

We know you are outstandingly well cared for because you told us how well you all get on with one another and your teachers. This helps your excellent personal development. In particular, you know a great deal about how to grow up healthily and safely.

All these good qualities exist because the school is so well led and managed. The headteacher is energetic and well organised and inspires the staff to work with her to make sure you get the best possible education. Your teachers and adults work as a very good team. I have asked the school to improve one thing.

- The outside area for Reception children needs to be improved, so it can be used in all weathers.

Once again, thanks for all your help.

With all good wishes for the future,

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector