

St Peter's Church of England Combined School, Burnham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110450
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310309
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	George Rayner

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Elisabeth King
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Minnicroft Road Burnham SL1 7DE
Telephone number	01628 602295
Fax number	01628 660726

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This village school is smaller than average. Although pupils' socio-economic circumstances are generally similar to the national picture, there is considerable variation in their individual home circumstances, as the school serves some areas of relative deprivation. An above average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. A higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal dates. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage; a few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion with learning difficulties is above average. Several of these pupils have significant emotional and behavioural needs.

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. It has significantly improved standards in recent years, to secure good achievement for pupils. Until 2005, Year 6 standards were low in English, mathematics and science. They are now average overall and on the threshold of being above average in mathematics and science. This is because teachers give effective guidance that results in pupils using their skills well to solve mathematical problems and to find things out in scientific investigations. While English standards have also improved, they remain below average. Many pupils find it difficult to explain and develop their ideas when writing at length. Teachers recognise that, while in most respects teaching and learning are good, the help that they have given pupils to improve their skills has not been effective enough. They are working together to improve this. Lessons are increasingly providing good opportunities for pupils to talk about and act out their ideas, which is helping them to work out what they have to write. This development is too recent to have had significant impact on standards.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has been key to securing the improvements. She has given the school a very clear direction, effectively focused on raising standards. Many staff and governors say that her leadership has been inspirational. She has secured considerable unity of purpose among her colleagues, who all share the drive for improvement. The track record of securing improvement, together with clarity of vision about what still needs to be done, give the school a good capacity for further improvement.

The headteacher and her staff have ensured that good personal development and well-being go hand in hand with pupils' academic progress. The good curriculum makes a strong contribution to both, by providing effective learning opportunities and by teaching pupils to care for themselves and to have concern for others. Success in ensuring that pupils have a good awareness of how to live healthily and keep themselves safe is recognised by the Active Mark award and Healthy Schools status. The adults' high commitment to care ensures that pupils are happy and secure. Parents appreciate this. One summed up the views of many in saying, 'St Peter's is a lovely little school, that creates a feeling of community and belonging among its children.' Pupils say emphatically that they enjoy coming here. They show this by their enthusiasm in being involved with all that the school has to offer. Most also show it by their regular attendance. A few are absent too often, however, which prevents them from benefiting fully from the school's provision. The school has worked well, in partnership with outside agencies, to raise attendance, so that this is no longer unsatisfactory, as reported by the previous inspection. It is still below average, however, and remains an important area for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation stage. In most years, they enter with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in their social development and use of language to communicate. The current children entered at a higher level, however. Good teaching provides an effective balance of adult led activities and opportunities for children to find things out for themselves through play and exploration. The adults work together well to ensure that children are well cared for and happy. This helps them to make good progress in their learning and particularly their personal development. By the time they leave the Reception class, most reach the expected levels in most of their areas of learning, although several are still not fully secure

in using language to communicate. The school is improving the outdoor area, but this currently provides limited opportunities for children to develop their independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' English standards by giving them better opportunities to improve their writing.
- Raise pupils' attendance rate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and, by the end of Year 6, their standards are average overall. Following good progress in mathematics and science, standards in these subjects are improving. Standards in English remain below average however. This is because, while pupils' progress in reading and speaking is good, it is only satisfactory in writing. Most can produce short pieces of writing competently. They are more limited at producing imaginative extended writing, or using a range of techniques to develop their descriptions and explanations. The school succeeds in ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve as well as each other. Those with learning difficulties make as much progress as their classmates. For example, those who find it difficult to behave or concentrate are supported well so that they, and their classmates, can make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand why rules are needed and know the difference between right and wrong. Each class creates a classroom code that sets out, through agreement, what pupils believe to be acceptable classroom behaviour. Most behave very well, but a small number do not always do so. Pupils prepare well for the challenges of living in a multicultural society through effective opportunities to increase awareness of other cultures. Relationships are good and pupils play and work happily together. Incidents of bullying and racism are rare and pupils are confident that these will be dealt with promptly if they do occur. A large majority of pupils have good attendance but a small group whose attendance is irregular affects the overall rate. Members of the school council have shown responsibility in fostering the sale of healthy snacks. Pupils give good support to promoting worthy charities. They prepare themselves well for their futures through their good progress in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan a good variety of interesting tasks, which motivate pupils to be willing learners. Teachers clearly express their expectations for behaviour. They praise pupils well when they succeed in meeting these, which boosts their confidence and generates good working relationships. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to give extra help or encouragement to those pupils who need this to keep up with the pace of work. In the very best lessons, highly imaginative activities and use of resources capture pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment, so that their learning is excellent. This was seen in a Year 4 history lesson where pupils worked with considerable imagination in groups to act out friezes to show what they had learned about customs in ancient Egypt. Teachers use marking well to encourage pupils

and often prompt them to think about how they could improve their work. Since the last inspection, teachers have improved the way in which they use assessment to ensure appropriate challenges for all pupils and check their progress. This is not yet fully consistent in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is relevant to the needs of all groups of pupils and there are good practical and creative opportunities for independent and investigative learning. Drama is used well to support pupils' speaking and listening skills and is becoming increasingly effective in helping them to prepare to write. The school is developing a topic-based approach to encourage pupils to apply and develop their skills and knowledge across subjects. This is not yet providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing in a variety of 'real' tasks. A good range of well-attended clubs enriches the curriculum to enhance pupils' enjoyment, involvement and teamwork. Educational visits effectively extend pupils' experiences and visitors who work in the community help them to understand the ways in which they can contribute.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures are fully in place, understood by all adults and diligently carried out. A 'Positive Behaviour Policy', drawn up in consultation with parents, has improved pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Good links with the school nurse provide guidance for healthy lifestyles and support for pupils' emotional development. Several pupils benefit from attending the Breakfast Club. They enjoy sharing breakfast with friends and this helps them to feel ready to learn. Pupils say, 'The food is lovely and it is a great time to talk and play games.' The school is developing some outstanding initiatives to promote pupils' care and welfare. For example, it is helping pupils to be better prepared for school life by setting up pre-school groups. These are having a significant impact upon the personal and social skills with which children start the Foundation Stage, which is greatly improving their preparedness for learning. The school is developing an increasingly effective system to identify and help pupils falling behind in their progress. Its use is not yet fully consistent across all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Despite the school's continuing best efforts to appoint a deputy headteacher, the leadership team is currently below full strength. This has placed additional demands on staff, but they have shared these willingly and are succeeding in continuing to run the school effectively. Subject leaders are well involved in monitoring and developing their areas. A few are relatively new to their areas of responsibility. They are still developing their skills, for example in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Governors are fully informed about the school's work and improvement priorities and have a well-organised system for monitoring and supporting the work of each class. Effective self-evaluation has given the school a clear focus on the areas that it has needed to improve. The key issues from the previous inspection have been tackled well so that, for example, the use of assessment to support pupils' learning is now a developing strength.

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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 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	2
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

15 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Combined School, Burnham, Burnham, SL1 7DE

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and we are grateful for the help you gave by talking to us and showing us your work. We were able to see that yours is a good school.

You make good progress in your learning. This is particularly so in mathematics and science. By the time you leave Year 6, your standards in these are a little better than we see in most schools. You also learn to read and speak well. The area which is not as good as the others is your writing. I have asked the teachers to give you more chances to talk about what you are going to write and sometimes to act it out. This will help you to be clearer about what you have to write.

We could see that yours is a happy school. The adults care for you very well and they are proud of you. You help your teachers a lot by being cheerful, working hard and being willing to join in with things. Most of you come to school regularly. Just a few do not. This is a shame because it means that you are missing out on all of the good things in the school and it makes it harder to do well in your learning.

The adults know how to make your school even better and they are working hard to make sure this happens. We know that you will continue to help them. Well done to you all and very best wishes for your future lives.

Yours faithfully

George Rayner

Lead Inspector