

The Clinton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113452
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311274
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Wiseman
Headteacher	April Banbury
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Merton Okehampton EX20 3EQ
Telephone number	01805 603357
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children's attainment on entry is broadly similar to that expected for their age, but it can vary substantially from year to year. Several children, often boys, start school with poor communication and language skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that found nationally, and is even higher than this in some year groups. The school has experienced many changes in teaching staff for some time. The school holds the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Clinton provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Achievement is sound and standards are broadly average. Given the constraints of continuing staff changes, the school has done well to improve, for example, provision for children in Reception and the pupils' writing and numeracy skills. It has also developed a sound range of learning opportunities. These include creative and practical activities in the 'curriculum enrichment hour' and using information and communication technology (ICT). These have promoted the pupils' good personal development and well-being, particularly their contributions to school life, their enjoyment of school and considerate relationships. Teaching and provision are good in Reception and Year 1 and children make good progress. Teaching and learning in other classes are satisfactory. There have been positive improvements such as a strengthened focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the sharing of clear learning objectives with pupils. Continued changes in teaching staff, some related to weaknesses in leadership and communication, have slowed the rate of improvement in pupils' progress. This is because new staff need time to get to know the pupils. Nevertheless, standards in Year 6 are broadly average showing that most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Despite some improvement, especially by more able pupils who increasingly progress well, there is some variation in how well pupils develop their research skills and progress as independent learners. This is an inclusive school where pupils are valued equally. Pupils receive sound care, guidance and support and contribute well to the school community. There are good links with outside agencies, but on occasions, staff changes have reduced the normally close and effective support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is because information about pupils' needs has not always been shared with new staff soon enough. Constant staff changes have also undermined many parents' confidence in the school. This is particularly because the school has not adequately communicated with parents to ensure that everyone can work together to help the pupils. Parents' views are widely polarised. Similar numbers either support the headteacher or have strong concerns about how the school is run. Parents are right to have concerns about continued changes in teaching staff and its consequent constraints on staff, its adverse impact on pupils' progress and its negative effect on parents' confidence in the school. However, positive aspects of school life, including the improvements identified above, which reflect satisfactory leadership and management and self-evaluation, are not always widely understood. This is because, in a climate of uncertainty, the headteacher's leadership style and the work of governors have not been successful in strengthening partnerships between the school and parents. A new chair of governors and a new senior teacher are now making constructive moves to support a more team-orientated approach to leadership and management. The headteacher and governors satisfactorily fulfil their statutory duties and play an effective part in ensuring pupils' well-being. However, they acknowledge that they have not been effective enough in securing the good lines of communication needed to restore parents' full confidence in the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are welcomed into a very well resourced learning area when they enter school. The relatively new teacher in the Reception and Year 1 class promotes good relationships with parents. These help the children to settle quickly and experience a good start to their education. The children make good progress overall from starting points which typically show some weaknesses, particularly relating to the use of words. Most attain the early learning goals set

for their age. There is a strong emphasis on promoting children's speaking and writing skills and this is helping children to make particularly good progress in developing these skills. Teaching and learning are good. The children have good opportunities to initiate learning for themselves, both indoors and outdoors. Children benefit from good care, guidance and support. Learning targets are clearly displayed and these enable children to work and progress well at appropriate levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way the school and parents work and communicate with each other to help pupils learn and to improve their skills.
- Develop a shared approach to leadership and management so that staff and governors can use all their skills and contribute more effectively to the work of the school. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their ability. Children make a good start in the Reception and Year 1 class, especially in developing their communication skills. Overall progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and pupils reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. Satisfactory progress continues through Years 3 to 6. By Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Despite changes in teachers, pupils' progress has been improving. More pupils have been reaching the appropriately challenging targets set for them, especially more able pupils. This has been accomplished by a strengthened focus on literacy and numeracy and on developing pupils' skills. However, at times, continued changes in teaching staff, which break the continuity in teaching and learning, still limit the pace of improvement in pupils' achievement. This means that pupils do better in some years than in others and in some subjects compared to others. For example, pupils' independent research and problem solving skills are not improving as quickly as their writing and calculation skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in Reception and learn how to communicate well in a school community. Pupils say, 'We love school, especially playtime where we have lots of equipment to play with and lots of things to do'. Attendance is good and reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show consideration for each other, especially older pupils towards younger pupils and as 'Play Leaders' helping others at lunchtimes. Pupils appreciate the learning opportunities offered to them, participating enthusiastically, for example, in the 'curriculum enrichment hour'. Pupils show a good awareness of safe living. They are equally knowledgeable about healthy eating, but are not as certain about the importance of exercise. Pupils' behaviour is good and the way they contribute to school life is a particular strength. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example, on the school council or 'eco' committee. Consequently, they develop good team skills and make good contributions to the school. Their sound academic skills and good social skills prepare them appropriately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children are taught well in Reception where there is a good balance of adult led and independent practical learning activities, both indoors and outdoors. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the Years 2 to 6 classes. ICT, including the use of interactive whiteboards, is increasingly stimulating pupils' interest in learning. The school has made other improvements. These include strengthening teachers' plans, emphasising pupils' writing and numeracy skills and clarifying learning objectives. However, changes in teaching staff, sometimes of a temporary nature, affect the quality of teaching. This leads to some inconsistencies because teachers are initially unsure of pupils' capabilities and this weakens the challenge presented to them. Improvement targets and the guidance given to individual pupils are not consistently good in all classes. This means that at times pupils are not challenged enough and could learn more quickly. Warm relationships, the valuing of pupils' contributions and a consistent emphasis on sharing learning objectives with pupils are typical features of teaching which effectively encourage pupils in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets learners' needs. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn healthily and safely. This is because the school has stimulating indoor and outdoor facilities that are used to enhance pupils' learning experiences. Children in Reception experience a well-balanced curriculum that takes good account of their stages of development. For the size of the school, there is a good enrichment programme for all years and a wide range of activities and links with other organisations. The 'curriculum enrichment hour' is a significant strength where staff expertise is used well to stimulate pupils' interest and skills. The school has a good range of indoor and outdoors resources but, except in Reception and Year 1, these are not always used to best effect to promote pupils' independence in their learning. Relatively recent actions to strengthen planning are addressing this issue and have brought improved progression in pupils' learning, especially in literacy and numeracy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Provision is underpinned by carefully planned procedures. Pupils are safeguarded satisfactorily because adults in the school show concern for the pupils on a day-to-day basis. As a result, pupils say that they enjoy school, feel safe and know who to go to if they have a problem. There are good links with outside agencies and intervention groups provide sound support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils are fully included and often get very close support, but on occasions, poor communication with parents delays the help given to such pupils. In contrast, parents with children in Reception enjoy good links with the school that benefit children's learning. There are good systems to track the progress of pupils. The quality of academic guidance given to pupils is satisfactory, but varies through the school. For example, children in Reception receive good guidance in their learning journals. Older pupils have a greater awareness of their targets and therefore know what to do to improve more than pupils in Years 2 and 3.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved well since the last inspection. The 'curriculum enrichment hour', introduced by the headteacher, is enriching pupils' interest in learning. The focus on literacy and numeracy is lifting pupils' skills. These show what can be achieved when the school works together as a community and show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Governance and selfevaluation are satisfactory. Nevertheless, weaknesses in the headteacher's style of introducing initiatives and in communication are constraining the school's efforts to deal with continued changes in teaching staff. Some staff, and a significant number of parents who returned completed questionnaires, have limited confidence in the school leadership. Too much has been attempted in too short a period of time. Even though, for example, the focus on raising standards and on developing pupils' skills is appropriate, the headteacher is not always effective in communicating her intentions. When weaknesses are identified by the headteacher not everyone who needs to be involved, including staff, governors and parents, are sufficiently consulted or used to best effect in promoting improvement. There is shared recognition by senior managers of the severity of these weakened relationships. The contributions of the very new chair of governors and senior teacher are strengthening the commitment to address these issues.

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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?	3
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?	4
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 18 October 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of The Clinton Church of England Primary School, Merton, EX20 3EQ Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed our visit. Particular thanks to the members of the school council who spoke with my colleague. You were all very polite and helpful. We consider your school to be a satisfactory school with some developing strengths. These are the other main things we found:
 - Most of you make steady progress and reach the standards expected in the majority of schools. An increasing number of you are doing even better in writing and mathematics.
 - Your attendance is good. You behave well and show consideration towards each other.
 - You experience some interesting learning activities, including at playtimes and during the 'curriculum enrichment hour' and especially in Reception and Year 1. Many of these activities are the reason why you enjoy school and have a good understanding of safe living.
 - Teaching and the care you receive are satisfactory. I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do these things to help your school to become an even better school:
 - Improve the way they work with your parents to help you learn.
 - Work more closely as a team so they can use their skills to lead and manage the school more effectively. You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your best. Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future. Alex Baxter Lead inspector

18 October 2007

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**Inspection of The Clinton Church of England Primary School,
Merton, EX20 3EQ**

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- Your attendance is good. You behave well and show consideration towards each other.
- You experience some interesting learning activities, including at playtimes and during the 'curriculum enrichment hour' and especially in Reception and Year 1. Many of these activities are the reason why you enjoy school and have a good understanding of safe living.
- Teaching and the care you receive are satisfactory.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do these things to help your school to become an even better school:

- Improve the way they work with your parents to help you learn.
- Work more closely as a team so they can use their skills to lead and manage the school more effectively.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your best.

Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future.

Alex Baxter
Lead inspector