

Deerhurst and Apperley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115619
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312002
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cate morris
Headteacher	Pauline Mcevoy
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2003
School address	Apperley Gloucester GL19 4DQ
Telephone number	01452 780374
Fax number	01452 780374

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school serving the two villages and the surrounding area. Nearly all pupils are of White British descent and none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. Attainment on entry into Reception varies from group to group but is generally a little above average. There have been several staffing changes in the last two years and a new headteacher took up post in September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. The advent of a permanent headteacher has resulted in a renewed sense of purpose amongst staff and governors, and re-established the confidence of parents and the enthusiasm of pupils. Parents have already noticed a change in the ethos and atmosphere in the school. 'We feel confident that her energy and enthusiasm will drive the school forward to a very bright future', was one of many positive comments made to inspectors.

The school has been through turbulent times since the last inspection, which resulted in standards falling and pupils leaving the school. The school governors took strong action to halt this decline and have worked steadfastly with a number of temporary headteachers to raise standards. Although the school has not yet reached the high standards reported previously, it has turned the corner and the pupils are achieving appropriately. However, standards in writing, although average, are lower than in other subjects and there is a particular weakness with spelling. This is because pupils' writing has largely been limited to literacy lessons and they have had too few opportunities to practise their basic skills by writing across a range of subjects.

Children in Reception receive a good start to their education. A wide range of exciting activities, designed to stimulate the imagination, enable them to achieve well. In the rest of the school, teachers work hard to interest and motivate their pupils. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and interact well with them. Pupils know what they are going to learn, explanations are clear and questions are frequently challenging. However, the pace of lessons sometimes drops because teachers talk for too long or do not challenge pupils sufficiently to finish a task in a given time. In addition, resources such as interactive whiteboards are not used imaginatively, and this means that learning is not made as interesting or exciting as it could be.

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They show a good understanding of the necessity for a healthy lifestyle and the need to stay safe. Pupils' views are listened to and respected. They contributed enthusiastically to the interview procedures for the new headteacher. They have positive attitudes to their learning and respond eagerly when lessons and themes are stimulating. This is clear from the high standards of work from the Art Week held earlier in the year. The school works hard to make its curriculum interesting and relevant to all pupils. It has identified appropriate strategies to improve writing and generate more opportunities for creativity. However, these changes have not yet had a full impact on standards attained. The staff are committed to the all-round development of all pupils and the personal care and support they provide are good. However, although assessment and marking on a day-to-day basis are satisfactory, they are variable in quality and do not always give pupils enough guidance about what they need to do to reach the next level in their work and how they can improve.

The new headteacher has already shown herself to be perceptive by accurately recognising the key areas for improvement, although it is too soon for her actions to have had an impact on standards. Overall, staff and governors know how well the school is doing, and their self-evaluation is accurate.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception class now make good progress. All join Year 1 having reached the standards appropriate for their age, and many exceed them. Teaching is lively and interesting. There is a good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. Lively, interesting themes make the curriculum and learning relevant and exciting and the school makes very good use of the outdoor area to provide further stimulus. The care and attention given to children's welfare are good. More emphasis is being placed on the development of writing skills although it is too soon to see the result of the actions being taken. The attention paid to developing social skills at this early stage of the term is preparing children well for future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to guide short-term planning and to set more sharply focused targets for pupils.
- Plan and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their literacy skills, especially spelling, in all subjects.
- Increase the pace of lessons and improve teachers' expertise in the use of new technology in order to stimulate pupils' interest and make teaching and learning more effective.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The rate of progress in English, mathematics and science has improved because the school identified accurately those areas that needed development. The recent focus on literacy resulted in very good improvements in national tests at the end of both key stages last summer and the school exceeded the challenging targets set in both mathematics and English. However, writing remains a relative weakness. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily because their needs are identified appropriately and they are provided with sound support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a harmonious community. Pupils behave well and they are adamant that there is no bullying. The recent introduction of a 'house' system was greeted with enthusiasm and has further enhanced pupils' positive attitudes. Pupils understand and appreciate different cultures, faiths and traditions, although their understanding of Britain as a culturally diverse community is not so secure. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective and the strong links with the local church enhance their spiritual development. Pupils contribute well to the community through activities such as fundraising for local, national and international charities. They enthusiastically take on responsibilities, and the school council meets regularly. Pupils leave the school with above average standards in their basic skills. These, together with their well developed personal skills, especially in confidence and self-esteem, prepare them well for the next stage in their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers plan their lessons carefully and manage pupils' behaviour well. They know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear; consequently, pupils are usually confident about tackling their work. Occasionally, teachers spend too long introducing a lesson, which slows the pace and means that pupils have too little time to complete the tasks set. In addition, teachers are not sufficiently challenging in the time they set pupils to complete their work, particularly when carrying out short-burst tasks. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards appropriately, but some lack confidence and are not adventurous in their use, which means that learning is not always as stimulating for the pupils as it could be. Teaching assistants give sound support, particularly to pupils with learning difficulties. Marking is satisfactory but does not focus sufficiently on what pupils need to do to improve their work, and this restricts their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The planning of work over a three-year period ensures that pupils in mixed age classes have their needs met, although links across different subjects have not yet been sufficiently developed. As a particular result, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills. There is good provision for pupils' personal development, and a number of visitors and a good range of school clubs successfully enrich pupils' learning and promote positive attitudes towards school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure are well established and staff are familiar with them. Pupils are confident that they have someone to talk to and that they are listened to if they have a problem. Support provided by the staff is effective, and consequently the personal development of the children is good. Systems for checking pupils' academic progress are improving. Information is used successfully to identify pupils in need of additional support. However, it is not used efficiently enough to set sharply focused targets for all pupils. Consequently, targets are too broad and pupils do not fully understand what they have to do to reach the next stage in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has already established very good relationships with staff and governors and there is a strong commitment to ensure pupils continue to enjoy school and show real enthusiasm for learning. There is a satisfactory capacity to improve further, because the headteacher, governors and staff have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to raise standards and is taking appropriate actions to bring this about. The school is beginning to use data appropriately to check its own performance. For example, writing was identified as a concern. Training was provided to develop teachers' confidence and expertise and the improvement in

pupils' achievement is evident in their work, although there is still more to do. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Most monitoring has been carried out by successive interim headteachers. As a result, teachers have had few opportunities to check standards for themselves, although they have drawn up satisfactory action plans. The governing body is knowledgeable and supportive of the school. Governors monitor effectively and they have a good picture of how well the school is performing. Although a small minority of parents understandably expressed concerns about the frequent changes in leadership over the last few years, most were also optimistic about the future. Overall, a good partnership has been established with parents, who hold the school in high regard.

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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?	2
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	2
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	2
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	2

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	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

10 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Deerhurst and Apperley CE Primary School, Gloucester GL19 4DQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a satisfactory education and is working hard to make it even better.

This is what we thought about your school.

- You behave well and are keen to learn.
- You are doing much better in English, mathematics and science this year.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- The curriculum covers all the subjects you are supposed to learn and you enjoy the visits and visitors which bring learning alive for you.
- Teachers help you to make the progress you should.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher and governors understand very well what must be done to make your school even better.

This is what we think can be improved.

- You need to improve your writing, particularly spelling, and we have asked the school to give you more opportunities to practise your literacy in all subjects.
- We think you should know more about how well you are doing in your work, and your targets should be more precise so that you know exactly what you need to do to reach the next level in your learning.
- We have asked teachers to make lessons more interesting and stimulating by shortening the introductions and challenging you more in the amount of time you are allowed to complete tasks. We also think lessons would be more exciting if they used the interactive whiteboards more imaginatively.

We are glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes, Mrs Christine Huard Lead inspector

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Lead inspector