

# Mears Ashby Church of England Endowed School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 122026           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Northamptonshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 314195           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 27 March 2008    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Melvyn Hemmings  |

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 aided                                       |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 74  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                    |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Patricia White  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Amanda Molcher  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 8 December 2003                                       |
| <b>School address</b>                     | North Street<br>Mears Ashby<br>Northampton<br>NN6 0DW |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01604 810063  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01604 810063  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a small, relatively socio-economically advantaged village school with pupils taught in three mixed-age classes. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.

## 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 school. Its Christian ethos provides pupils with a caring and friendly environment in which to learn. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and are particularly pleased with this aspect of its provision. One parent's comment is typical of many, 'It is obvious that every child is valued as an individual and my children are very accepting of differences in other people. I love the happy and friendly yet calm, purposeful atmosphere in the school.'

Children have a good start to their education in the Reception class, making good progress and achieving well. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1, almost all exceed the goals expected for their age. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. This represents satisfactory achievement from their attainment on entering Reception, which is above the expectations for their age. The main reason pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress rather than good progress is that the work given to them is not consistently challenging enough. Though standards in writing are above average, this is a relatively weaker aspect of pupils' performance in English.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher shoulders much of the responsibility for leading and managing the school as well as having a teaching commitment of two and a half days per week. Other teachers are not delegated sufficient responsibility in order to provide a better balance amongst the leadership team and involve them more effectively in promoting school improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and enables the school to identify the correct areas for development. These include raising standards in writing and improving the satisfactory quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6, including the way in which assessment information is used to match work to pupils' needs. A variety of initiatives have been introduced to bring about improvements in these areas. However, these are not monitored and evaluated rigorously enough in order to give a clear picture of the extent to which they are proving successful.

Pupils behave well and are kind and considerate to others. This makes a positive contribution to the warm and friendly atmosphere evident throughout the school. They enjoy coming to school and show positive attitudes to their learning. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and help make classrooms friendly places in which to learn. The satisfactory curriculum is extended well by a wide variety of enrichment activities, including educational visits and out-of-school clubs. Pupils say they especially like the many sporting activities in which they can take part. The pastoral care and support for pupils are good and underpin their good personal development. All staff are firmly committed to ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. The strong links with outside agencies provide effective extra support for individual pupils when required, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Its recent track record shows a satisfactory capacity to make the necessary changes to bring about further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Good quality teaching and learning in the Reception class lead to children making good progress. The curriculum is planned effectively to cover all the areas of learning in an interesting way. Children are given practical and engaging activities that are linked well to their own experiences.

Of particular note is the way they are encouraged to make choices for themselves and so make a good start in their development as independent learners. Children behave well, enjoy their activities and show good collaboration skills when working with others. Their progress is checked carefully so that work given to them matches their different abilities well. To improve provision further, the school has rightly identified the need to use the outdoor area more effectively to promote children's learning. The induction arrangements are good and help children to quickly become accustomed to everyday school routines. Links with parents are effective and ensure they are kept fully informed of their children's progress.

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

- Improve the use of assessment in lesson planning in Years 1 to 6 to ensure that activities more effectively challenge pupils of different abilities.
- Ensure all leaders are fully involved in promoting school improvement.
- More rigorously monitor and evaluate initiatives introduced to bring about improvement, particularly in writing and teaching.

A small proportion of 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 progress of children in the Reception class is good and they achieve well. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, and by the end of Year 2 attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress throughout the school and by the end of Year 6 reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. On starting school, children's skills are above those usually found and so the standards attained represent satisfactory achievement. In English, pupils reach higher standards in reading than in writing. The school has introduced a variety of strategies to improve writing skills. These include a wider range of stimuli as a starting point for writing and more opportunities to write in different styles in other subjects. In mathematics, pupils' skills in solving problems have improved because of a focus on developing this aspect of the subject. The extra support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they make the same rate of progress as other pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. They are well mannered and willing to listen to and respect the views of others. Older pupils show a great deal of care for younger ones, such as when they look after them during lunchtimes. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well and can talk knowledgeably about the need to have a balanced diet and to take regular exercise. They also have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and make a positive contribution to school life. For example, by being a member of the 'Worry Team', to whom pupils can talk if they have concerns that are troubling them, pupils give strong support to others. Pupils also make a good contribution to the village community. They are developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy in a satisfactory way and are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers manage lessons well to ensure good behaviour and a calm working atmosphere. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs and small groups, which make a positive contribution to their social development as well as developing understanding. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to plan sufficiently challenging work for pupils of different abilities. This limits pupils' progress overall to being satisfactory rather than good. The involvement of pupils in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing and how they might improve is at an early stage of development. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, being keen to share ideas and collaborate with others. Teaching assistants provide appropriate support for all pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The involvement of parents in their children's learning is promoted well. For example, by parents being able to work with them at the start of the morning session each Friday, they make a good contribution to their children's learning in school.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum provides pupils with a variety of good quality opportunities that promote their social development. For example, pupils can take part in a range of school clubs in which they are encouraged to collaborate in pairs and small groups. Pupils can also go on a variety of visits, including a residential stay on the Isle of Wight. The programme for personal development helps pupils gain a good understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This programme includes a healthy eating activity week and visits by the Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs Trust and the Life Education Bus. The links with other providers, such as professional sports coaches and musicians, extend pupils' skills further. The provision for English and mathematics is satisfactory and promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in a satisfactory manner. The school is extending its use of activity weeks to better promote links between subjects and to encourage pupils to learn in an active way.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school's safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. They include comprehensive child protection procedures in which all staff have been trained. As a result, all staff understand fully the course to follow if they have concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Thorough risk assessments are in place for activities in and around school and on educational visits. The good systems for monitoring and encouraging attendance are reflected in the above average attendance rate. There are good links with other services, such as the police and fire brigade, to support pupils' understanding of how to stay safe. The extra support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to take part in all activities. The school has appropriate systems for checking the progress pupils make. Teachers use the information from these systems to set targets for pupils. These targets are not always challenging enough, however, and contribute to pupils making satisfactory rather than good progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a good role model, carrying out her responsibilities diligently and with enthusiasm. She gives clear educational direction and all staff share a common commitment to helping the school improve further. A variety of professional development opportunities are provided for staff to extend their expertise. These are linked well to individual needs and whole-school issues. The school acknowledges that leadership responsibilities could be more evenly shared so all leaders play a full part in school improvement. For instance, the activity of monitoring and evaluating the impact of strategies to improve the school's performance is not well enough shared among the teachers. Good links have been made with other organisations to promote effectively the care and support of all pupils. Governors are supportive but their role in holding the school to account for its performance is underdeveloped.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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 <sup>1</sup> 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 | 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?   | 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>                                       | 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  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mears Ashby CofE Endowed School, Mears Ashby, NN6 0DW

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. Yours is a satisfactory school. It helps you make satisfactory progress and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are above average by the end of Year 6.

What we found that your school does well:

- it is a very friendly place in which to work and play
- you have a good start to your education in the Reception class
- you behave well and are polite and courteous
- you enjoy coming to school and your attendance rate is above average
- the way you are adopting healthy lifestyles is good
- you make a good contribution to the school community and to the life of the village
- you have positive attitudes to your learning and collaborate well with other pupils
- the adults care for you well and help you to feel safe while in school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- make sure you are always given work that makes you think hard
- ensure all those who lead the school are fully involved in helping it improve
- check more carefully how well the changes made help you make better progress.

All my best wishes for the future.

Melvyn Hemmings Lead inspector

28 March 2008

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Lead inspector