

Finedon Mulso Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122034
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314199
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	143
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Read
Headteacher	Avril Wise
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2008
School address	Wellingborough Road Finedon Wellingborough NN9 5JT
Telephone number	01933 680433
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a small voluntary aided junior school with strong Christian ethos in the Northamptonshire village of Finedon. It has close links with St Mary the Virgin Church but serves the whole parish community. It has six classrooms. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and none who speak English as an additional language. Children enter the school with skills that are similar to those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is higher than the national average and there is a below average number of families who are eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and it has some good features. Issues arising from the last inspection have been tackled well and the school has made satisfactory progress.

The leadership of the relatively new headteacher is good and she has been instrumental in bringing about many positive changes. The management of the school and permanency of the teaching staff have been stabilised. The school accurately evaluates its effectiveness. The pace of improvement has been rapid since the last monitoring visit. All pupils make good progress in their personal development. The school gives effective support to vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). It recognises it has still more work to do with the more able pupils, who are not always given work that sufficiently challenges their thinking. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and there is an aura of calmness around the school, indicative of pupils enjoying their education and wanting to learn and get better. Good relationships exist throughout the school.

The permanent teaching staff in place and improved approaches to teaching and learning are making a difference. Teaching throughout the school is now good overall with examples of outstanding practice. There is a smaller percentage of satisfactory lessons. Better quality lessons and the careful monitoring pupils' progress have successfully raised pupils' achievement and rates of progress. However, the legacy of inconsistencies in teaching in the past means that standards are still patchy in some subjects and some year groups. Standards in mathematics and in writing are weaker than standards in reading and science overall. Although standards are getting closer to national expectations for all core subjects in Year 6, given their starting points, pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory overall. These pupils have made up for some of the lost ground in previous years and made reasonable gains since the end of Year 5. Whilst improving, the school recognises the need for further development of links with the infant school in order to build more effectively on pupils' skills when pupils enter the school.

Subject leaders for core subject areas are all monitoring and leading their subjects well. Less emphasis has been given to the management of the foundation subjects, although the school has sound strategies in place to address this. Not enough is done to make best use of information and communication technology (ICT) in other subject areas. Support from the local authority, including high quality staff training and development, has contributed to whole school improvement. The governors fulfil their roles well; they are knowledgeable of the school and the importance of monitoring the school carefully. The formation of a new curriculum committee has made a significant impact on identifying the existing strengths within the school and points for development. The school is providing satisfactory value for money and has a good capacity to improve in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics and writing, by targeting underachievers and to ensure the school meets national expectations in all subjects in all year groups.
- Ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons and attain the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Further develop transitional links with feeder schools to ensure greater curricular continuity and the steady progress of all pupils in Year 3.

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

Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and successful actions to tackle underachievement have seen progress accelerate recently and standards rise. Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils who need extra help in learning to read, write and count, is now satisfactory and standards in some subjects and in some year groups are closer to the national average than previously.

As a result of consistently good teaching in Year 6, standards have improved so that all core subjects are just below average, with data showing that pupils have achieved at least satisfactorily. The high profile given to reading and the introduction of more practical lessons in science, have shown improvements across the school. However, the legacy of past underachievement means that standards in some other year groups, especially in Years 4 and 5 are still below average despite some reasonable progress made this year. A transitional dip in Year 3 means that progress is not as marked here as elsewhere in the school. Work is better matched than previously to the range of abilities overall, although not well enough adapted for the more able. Therefore, the school is not enabling enough pupils to attain the higher levels in national tests.

The more recent high expectations of staff ensure that standards in current lessons are consistently above average, but this has not been sustained for sufficient time to have yet made a significant impact on standards overall. Also, of late, pupils are achieving better than previously. This is shown in their motivation and attitude to learning, their understanding of what makes them successful, their progress towards targets for learning and the improved presentation of their work, which is now more consistent across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is a calm and happy school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because there is a firm focus on personal, social and health education. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy, although it is disappointing that they do not demonstrate this through the contents of their lunchboxes. Improved facilities through the 'Trim trail' and the 'Huff and Puff' equipment in the outdoor play area have improved the opportunities for physical activity and purposeful play at break times. This has also reduced incidents in the playground, where behaviour is now usually good, as it is throughout the rest of the school. This is because pupils have a clear understanding of the school rules and the high expectations of staff. Pupils feel safe in school. They believe that incidents of bullying are extremely rare and know who to approach when help is required.

Pupils enjoy their education and work hard during lessons because teaching now fully engages them. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved due to more rigorous procedures for following up absence and pupils' greater enjoyment of school. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through the school council and other responsibilities. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils take responsibility for equipment in the playground, take part in their own PowerPoint presentation for transition evening, and help out at the infant school sports afternoon. Pupils are developing more of the interpersonal skills needed for the next stage of education by being

able to explain their thinking more eloquently and frequently working effectively together in pairs or small groups. The pupils' progress towards the world of work is satisfactory because standards in their core skills remain satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some examples of outstanding teaching across the school. During the inspection there were a small number of satisfactory lessons; although monitoring of lessons by the senior leadership team, governors and the local authority, indicate that the quality of teaching is consistently almost always good.

Pupils settle to learning quickly, listen well to their teachers and are almost always interested in the lessons. They practise speaking or explain their ideas using 'talking partners', which is highly effective. The best lessons are well paced and teachers' expectations are well adapted to pupils' needs. In these lessons, teachers swiftly build on gaps in pupils' knowledge and identify where there is need to repeat learning. Staff are becoming more skilled in using current assessment information to adapt planning to meet the needs of all pupils. In some lessons, insufficient thought is given to the challenge provided for those who are ready to move on to harder work or whether expectations for learning are realistic.

Working actively is now a feature of all lessons, which increases pupil enjoyment. Pupils are becoming more involved in assessing their own learning and the work of their fellow pupils in all classes. Staff skilfully check pupils' understanding and progress within each lesson against the learning objectives and success criteria. This is then followed up with checking individual and class progress towards pupil targets. Pupils are now more certain of their targets, which are referred to regularly. In some lessons, pupils receive advice about how to improve, for example, through the careful marking of their work, and this is now more consistent across the school. Resources, including the skills of support staff, are used effectively. This is mostly channelled towards low attaining pupils and those with LDD, although staff do try to ensure that the more able also have access to the support they need.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers pupils a well-structured curriculum that successfully balances a priority on literacy and numeracy with other subjects. It has set about making the curriculum imaginative and engaging, particularly through the introduction of a wider range of practical activities. Curriculum leaders are monitoring teaching and learning, planning, quality of work and pupil progress in their area of responsibility well. This has led to more consistency and continuity in the curriculum across the school and a greater certainty that staff are meeting the range of pupils' needs. The introduction of a curriculum committee on the governing body has increased governor involvement in monitoring the curriculum. Information shared as a result has helped staff to identify strengths and points for development in each subject area. It has also highlighted that standards of pupils' writing and mathematics remain as issues across the school. The school has piloted the idea of a more creative curriculum for foundation subjects and this is being rolled out across the school in the autumn term. Whilst the school's facilities for ICT are good, insufficient use is made of them in other curriculum areas.

There is a small number of clubs running at the school, such as choir and sports. Both pupils and their parents have commented that the range is currently too limited. However, the school enhances the current curriculum by inviting visitors to the school, arranging trips and residential for pupils. To link with their current science topic, Year 6 invited in the police to talk about forensic science and the whole school went to see a play at a provincial theatre to follow up on the work of real life authors in literacy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school pays appropriate attention to the safeguarding of pupils. The level of pastoral care and welfare is of an acceptable standard. The school monitors its most vulnerable pupils very carefully. Pupils learn in a safe and happy environment where relationships are good. The staff know pupils well and pay good attention to developing their personal and social skills. The school is developing stronger relationships with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils who need extra help receive the necessary support. Transition arrangements have improved so that pupils receive good support when they come into, or go out of, the school. A transition project is currently underway to ensure greater continuity across the curriculum and improve pupils' progress when they transfer from Year 2 to Year 3, although the project is in its early days. Necessary procedures are followed for child protection, assessing risk and for medical and emergency aid, with training for staff as appropriate. As a result of more effective use of success criteria and targets the school's academic support and guidance for pupils have improved significantly and they appreciate the guidance marking provides. Although some pupils exceed their targets the majority of pupils do not always attain the levels set. The tracking system enables staff to check upon the progress of pupils, so that the school is able to compare subjects and year groups. It is now beginning to use data more specifically to identify if particular interventions or support are working effectively with those pupils who this is specifically provided for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is ably led by a dedicated headteacher and deputy headteacher who, collectively with other staff and governors, have a shared vision for the school and are committed to its improvement. The subject leadership roles are coming together and systems are beginning to embed, which is making an impact on achievement overall and on sustainability over time.

Governors have been wholly supportive and have taken on more acknowledgement and ownership of their role in terms of monitoring and quality assurance. The school has mostly effectively addressed all of the points for improvement from the inspection when it was placed in a category of concern. It is beginning to address raising standards through the higher expectations of staff and pupils. The school now sets itself more challenging targets and accurately measures pupils' performance against these. The extensive monitoring of literacy, numeracy and science provision has successfully identified areas for improvement. It acknowledges that whilst handwriting and presentation have improved across the school, that there is still more to do to raise standards in writing overall. The school continues to investigate the underperformance of some year groups in mathematics, although throughout the inspection some good quality learning was taking place in this area. The school has mostly evaluated itself accurately and has an appropriate improvement plan with sensible and achievable priorities for

development. With its new leadership and direction, and its recent track record, the school now has a good capacity to improve.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	3

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?	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?	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	3
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

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

3 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Finedon Mulso CE VA Junior School, Finedon NN9 5JT

It was a real pleasure to come back to your school again this week and see how well you are all getting on. I think you belong to an improving school. The school has made such good progress over the time of my visits that there is no longer a need for me to keep returning to your school. Mrs Wise is leading the school well with the support of your teachers, other staff and governors, who are all so dedicated. There are so many positive things taking place that I understand why you all enjoy coming to school more than you used to do. For example, I saw how some of the Years 3 and 4 pupils enjoyed the little games and challenges set to them in maths and Year 6 being absorbed in their chromatography experiments. I was particularly pleased to see the improved presentation in your books and how sensibly you use 'talking partners'.

Because your lessons are much more interesting than they used to be, you concentrate more and have fun learning. Your behaviour has improved in class and around the rest of the school. I think that Finedon Mulso Junior School now feels like a happy place to be. It was good to meet the school council again and get their views. Thank you. This was a really valuable part of the inspection.

I want your school to keep getting better, so I have asked staff to:

- help you all to improve, especially in mathematics and writing
- make sure those of you that learn easily and finish quickly have more to think about and do as well as you can
- develop links with the infant school to make sure that when Year 2 pupils transfer to Finedon Mulso Junior they keep on making progress.

You can help by making sure you always understand the success criteria in the lessons and checking your progress against your targets. Also, tell your teachers if the work they give you is too easy. One last point I need to mention is to remind you to bring a healthy packed lunch to school each day. It was disappointing that many of you are eating crisps and other chocolaty bars and snacks, which does not help you to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

I wish you all the very best and hope that you continue to improve in all areas. I also wish the Year 6 pupils a happy and successful time at their new school.

Yours sincerely Jane Melbourne Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

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