

Ewelme CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123197
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314537
Inspection date	16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Maine
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Markham
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2003
School address	Burrows Hill Ewelme Wallingford OX10 6HU
Telephone number	01491 839240
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- How are the school maintaining such high standards in Key Stage 2?
- Pupils' progress in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1
- The strengths of the school's care, guidance and support and its impact on pupils' personal development and well being

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with the headteacher, other teachers, governors, pupils and parents, examination of documentation and parental surveys. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

This small primary school is situated in a Grade 1 listed building. It serves a predominantly advantaged rural community and very few pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals. All pupils are of white British origin. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Ewelme has a Healthy Schools accreditation. At the time of the inspection there were five children of Foundation Stage age, attending on a part-time basis. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'The school offers a very caring and nurturing environment for a child. It represents the ideal of what one could hope for from a small village school', commented one parent, echoing the views of many. Indeed, governors, pupils and their parents are right to be proud of their school because it is a good school, with some outstanding features. It is at the heart of the village community and has close links with the parish Church. Strong Christian values underpin its work and, at Ewelme, every child really does matter. Consequently, pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. They feel safe and secure and look after each other very well. One pupil, with the approval of many others, said 'We love school because we all know each other so well and it is like a big family'. Pupils enjoy everything that the school has to offer and their attendance is excellent. They become eager and confident learners and 'work together in harmony' as one put it. As a result, they achieve well.

By the time they leave, pupils reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are exceptionally high and within the top five percent of schools nationally. Together with their very positive approaches to learning, this ensures that they are extremely well prepared for secondary education and the world beyond. They achieve well as a result of good teaching and because as one parent pointed out, 'a lot is expected of the children in terms of behaviour and learning and they thrive on this'.

The school is not content to rest on its laurels, however, and recognises there is room for further improvement. The inspirational headteacher has 'brought a clear and well rooted vision based on a solid understanding of what is needed' as one teacher put it. Successes are celebrated and effective strategies put in place to address any weaknesses. For example, the new headteacher recognised that pupils were not building sufficiently well on the good start they made in the Foundation Year in Key Stage 1 and that their progress accelerated in Key Stage 2. The results of the 2006 tests results in Year 2 were particularly weak in reading and writing in relation to previous years.

In response, significant additional resources were provided to enhance the teaching of reading with the result that attainment was much higher in Year 2 in 2007 and pupils are now making very good progress in reading throughout the school. The school has also sought to improve pupils' writing through providing more opportunities for them to write in real situations. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 were involved in writing letters to a well known supermarket chain about 'Fair Trade' produce illustrative of the school's commitment to sustainability. Visiting authors have helped to stimulate creativity and there are lively examples of writing throughout the school. For example, in the upper juniors there are some vivid interviews with 'inmates of Victorian workhouses', written on faded paper to create authenticity. Last year, the school published a very professional book of poetry containing contributions from every child in the school. As a result of these initiatives, standards in writing in Year 2 improved in 2007 but not significantly for the more able pupils. Similarly, whilst pupils do very well in writing in Key Stage 2, a few of the most able pupils are not achieving as highly as they do in reading.

The school is collecting an increasing amount of data about pupils' performance. In the past, this has not been used sufficiently well by teachers to set challenging targets for every pupil. This is now being addressed through rigorous systems designed to map the progress of every individual carefully and to provide additional support at an early stage when needed. This has been supported by a successful review of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and

disabilities, which is ensuring that no pupil can 'slip through the net'. Targets are now set for every child in English and mathematics and pupils are clear that they help them to improve. All of these measures are at the early stages of development and teachers are not entirely consistent in terms of the challenges they set for every pupil.

The school listens very carefully to its pupils through the school council, for example, and now offers an impressive array of additional activities in sport, music and the arts. These range from pursuits as diverse as mountain biking and chess and are greatly enjoyed by pupils and appreciated by parents. The curriculum is also enriched through residential visits and themed weeks. It is also outward looking and has links to schools in Uganda and France. French is taught throughout the school by a specialist teacher and broadens the curriculum still further. The headteacher has also strengthened links with the village community. Recently, for example pupils in Year 5 and 6 prepared a healthy meal for the residents of the adjoining almshouses and any other locals who wanted to come along! These activities enhance pupils' excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and sense of citizenship and contribute to their outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Staff are very committed and welcome the opportunities they have to work together to develop the school although they acknowledge that their roles in relation to improving teaching and learning are still developing. Governors are knowledgeable and astute and offer a good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher. Not least of the school's priorities are the exciting plans they have to develop the beautiful 15th Century site still further to meet the demands of the 21st Century curriculum. Standards have risen since the last inspection and all issues have been addressed. Together with the significant strides that have been made over the past year, this indicates that the school has outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage work in a class with Year 1 pupils. The curriculum is planned carefully through topics to meet their distinctive needs in all areas of learning. This dovetails very well with the Year 1 curriculum, and allows for additional challenge when needed. At the last inspection, the curriculum was inhibited by a lack of space. This has been fully addressed. The Foundation children now have their own dedicated outside area, which is used extensively to develop their learning in all areas. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the Foundation children worked outside creating 'number snakes' before joining their classmates to review their learning. Children enter the school with skills and understanding that vary from year to year but are better, overall, than is typically the case. They make good progress because of good teaching and generally reach above average standards in all areas of learning before they move on to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the opportunities for more able pupils to write in different situations in order to raise their attainment in writing still further.
- Develop the use of target setting to enable teachers to set challenging targets for all pupils.

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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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

29 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ewelme CofE Primary School, Wallingford, OX10 6HU

You may remember that I came to your school recently. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed my day at Ewelme and I thought you might like to know what I found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of the school because it is a good school, and in some aspects it is outstanding. You told me how much you enjoy all aspects of school life and how much you appreciate your beautiful surroundings. In particular, you appreciate the many opportunities you have for additional activities in sport and music, for example. The mountain biking looks like a lot of fun!

I was very impressed by your politeness and behaviour and your enthusiasm in lessons. Well done! I was also pleased to see how important the village community is to you all and the meal you cooked for the local residents sounds delicious! You are all doing very well because of good teaching and your own enthusiasm for learning. By the time you leave you are reaching very high standards. This means that you are very well prepared for secondary school.

You told me how much you like your headteacher and he has done a lot to make the school even better over the past year. He gets lots of help from all the staff and they are working hard together to make things even better for you. I have asked them to do a couple of things that I think might help:

- you are now having a lot more chances to write for different purposes. You are doing well in writing but I have asked the school to help some of you to do even better
- you told me how your targets are helping you to improve your work. This is all quite new and I want the teachers to get even better at it to make sure that all of you do as well as you can.

With the best of luck to you all.

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead inspector