

Checkendon Church of England (A) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123200
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314539
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Seal-Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Bather
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Checkendon Reading RG8 0SR
Telephone number	01491 680693
Fax number	01491 682807

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Checkendon CE is a much smaller than average primary school serving Checkendon and surrounding villages. Most pupils are from a White British background and all have English as their mother tongue. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but there is an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The current headteacher took up the post in September 2007. The school has had four different headteachers during the past six years. A significant numbers of pupils join or leave the school at different times particularly after Year 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Checkendon CE Primary has made significant improvements under the leadership of the headteacher. This is a good school. Pupils are achieving well because of good teaching and an interesting curriculum. Effective care, guidance and support and a very positive school atmosphere result in good personal development and well-being for pupils.

Good partnerships have been established with the church, parents and the community. Parents hold very positive views about the school and are pleased with both the care and education provided for their children. The school's positive ethos, the leadership of the headteacher, approachability of staff and the increased extra-curricular activities receive praise. Typical comments from the questionnaires were, 'The atmosphere and ethos are very special', 'The new headteacher has done lots of good things since she started' and 'Very pleased with my child's progress'.

The headteacher provides strong direction for the school, and welcome stability after a number of changes to the leadership. She is firmly focused on raising achievement, improving provision and enhancing the school's reputation. She has quickly gained the confidence and respect of pupils, parents, governors and staff. School self-evaluation is accurate and the school has used the findings well to plan for improvements. Under the headteacher's leadership, assessment and tracking systems to monitor pupils' attainment and progress are sharper. Positive action has been taken to raise achievement in writing and mathematics. In this small school, subject leadership is shared among a few teachers. Other leadership roles are developing well particularly in terms of monitoring performance and improvement planning.

Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. They make the purpose of the lessons clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Activities and tasks are well tailored to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, pupils are challenged, their interest is maintained and they make good gains in their learning. Occasionally, learning slows because of overlong introductions and pupils are not sufficiently involved in their learning. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make a valuable contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who need extra support and especially with literacy and numeracy. An effective curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional clubs, visits and visitors. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and it is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning.

Standards vary by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 because numbers in each year group are small and a significant number of pupils join or leave at different times. Pupils make good progress from their various starting points. Progress in writing and mathematics has improved because of action taken by the school. However, the school has recognised that not enough work takes place on investigations and problem solving in mathematics. Standards in the current Year 6 are above average overall.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen participation in activities. They are courteous, friendly and relate very well to others. Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around the school. Attendance is average overall. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and keep themselves safe. They make good contributions to the school and wider community. Pupils are well prepared for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's overall attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year. Children quickly settle into routines and make good gains in their personal development and sound gains in other areas of learning. They enjoy their learning and relate well to adults and other children. The quality of teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. The recommended areas of learning are covered adequately but these are not always incorporated into interesting topics, to add relevance and meaning to learning. Role-play areas and outside activities are not always sufficiently linked to main themes or topics. There are problems in making good arrangements to address the needs of Reception children and Year 1 pupils in the same class, but there are plans to remedy this. The most recent assessments show that current standards are above those expected except in elements of literacy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for investigative and problem solving activities in mathematics to raise achievement further.
- Improve provision and children's progress in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that learning in all lessons proceeds at a good pace and that pupils are involved fully in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall from their starting points through to the end of Year 6. Children made satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. The school has taken positive action to raise achievement in writing and mathematics across the school. Pupils are now achieving well in these key areas. National test results for Year 6 in 2007 were above average in English and science but closer to average in mathematics. Pupils with specific learning needs make good progress because they receive effective and helpful adult support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and show positive attitudes to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Clear expectations by staff and positive relationships lead to consistently good conduct. Pupils form very good relationships with adults and amongst themselves. They work well collaboratively in a range of activities. The school works hard to promote good attendance but a few pupils with poor attendance are deflating the school's attendance figures. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. In this 'eco school', pupils take steps to recycle materials and save energy and water. The raising of funds for a variety of charities contributes well to the wider community. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because, by the time they leave, they have well-developed personal and social skills and good literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Across the school, teachers have established very positive relationships with pupils and manage them well. As the pupils said, 'Teachers are friendly and helpful'. Pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and effective questioning. In Year 2 for example, speaking, listening, and writing skills are developed well through drama. Pupils are challenged and make good progress because activities and tasks are well matched to their abilities and needs. However, introductions to lessons are sometimes too long and this results in a slow pace and a lack of pupils' involvement. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and contribute well to learning, particularly for pupils who need extra help. The marking of pupils' work is constructive and helpful. Praise is given for good work and there are clear comments to guide improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress and contributes well to their personal development. Writing opportunities have been increased and this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Improving mathematics has also been a key priority but there is an over-reliance on a published scheme and the school recognises the lack of investigative and problem solving approaches. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection and better planning helps to ensure that all required areas of study are taught. There are well thought out plans to extend ICT provision further. A good range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning. The range of clubs has been increased and the clubs are much appreciated by pupils and parents. These include choir, golf, judo, tag rugby, mathematics, science and recorders. A popular residential visit for Year 5 and 6 pupils provides interesting outdoor activities and builds pupils' team skills. Health and safety education are promoted well across the curriculum. An adjoining school field has recently been acquired. The addition of an amphitheatre, willow domes and climbing equipment has turned this into a valuable learning resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support are effective and contribute well to pupils' personal development. The headteacher and staff know the pupils well and have established very good relationships with them and their parents. As parents commented 'Staff are very approachable' and there is a '...strong and caring ethos'. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are effective. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress have improved and are now good. Assessment information is usually used well to plan teaching. Assessment is also being used effectively to set individual learning targets in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils know what they are working towards and how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher brings a good range of experience and skills to the school. Leadership and management are promoting effective provision and good outcomes for pupils.

Effective self-evaluation means that the school knows what it does well and takes effective action to bring about improvements. There have been good improvements to assessment and to pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. The roles of other leaders are developing well so that they are more effective in monitoring performance and planning for improvement.

Governors are actively involved in the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's performance, which enables them to provide constructive challenge as well as support. Governors are rightly pleased with the school's recent developments.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	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	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	2

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?	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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**

20 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Checkendon Church of England (A) Primary School, Reading, RG8 0SR

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I have found.

Checkendon CE is a good school and its strengths are.

- You all thoroughly enjoy school.
- The school is a friendly, caring and very pleasant place to be.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Teaching is good, which is why you are making good progress.
- There is an improved and good range of clubs and visits, which enrich your learning and interests.
- You show a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- The school is well led by your headteacher.
- Staff take good care of you and give you good support.
- There are good partnerships with the church, parents and the community.

There are three areas that your teachers could work on to make it even better.

- You could make even more progress in mathematics with increased opportunities to investigate and solve problems.
- The activities for children in Reception could be improved.
- Teachers should always ensure that lessons move on at a brisk pace and that you are fully involved in your learning.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector