

SS Philip and James' Church of England Aided Primary School Oxford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123214
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314544
Inspection date	22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Vanessa Ward

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	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Corinna Redman
Headteacher	Ms Irene Conway
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Navigation Way Oxford OX2 6AB
Telephone number	01865 311064
Fax number	01865 311202

Age group	4-11
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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 the school is trying to improve standards and achievement in pupils' writing; how effectively the school is raising boys' achievement, especially in Years 1 and 2; how successfully the school enhances the pupils' personal development and well-being through both the curriculum and the care, guidance and support it provides. Evidence was gathered from the school's records, planning and policies, from observing teaching and learning and from discussion with staff. 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

The school is larger than average. Pupils enter the school in the September following their fourth birthday. The majority of the pupils are White British, the remainder coming from a wide range of heritages. Pupil turnover is higher than usual because families move into the area, often from abroad, to work or study for varying lengths of time. This also means that the number of pupils learning English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and of those entitled to free school meals, is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Philip and St James Primary School is a good school with several outstanding features. Care for individual pupils is a key priority and is central to all that the school does. This means that pupils feel safe and secure in school and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Parents comment that their children are 'flourishing', and 'full of excitement and enthusiasm about school'. The headteacher has an excellent understanding of how to improve the school and she has developed an impressive level of teamwork among the staff and governors. Newly devolved responsibilities among subject leaders and the reorganisation of the leadership team are being embraced enthusiastically and are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The procedures for school self-evaluation are thorough and accurate and successfully involve all stakeholders, including parents and pupils. One parent echoed the views of many when commenting that 'the school has a wonderful atmosphere in which teachers, pupils and parents work well together'.

Pupils enjoy learning and achieve well throughout the school because the teaching is good and the curriculum stimulating. Educational visits, special events and visitors to the school add greatly to their enjoyment. Pupils speak positively about their teachers, commenting that 'the teachers are friendly towards us and explain things well'. Teachers provide significant intellectual challenge in their lessons and their planning takes into account the needs of different groups of pupils. This helps to ensure that pupils reach their challenging targets. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading and mathematics are well above average. Standards in writing, whilst above the national average, are lower than those for reading and mathematics. The school recognises this and is taking action to accelerate pupils' progress. An increase in the teaching of letter sounds and names and more opportunities to write are helping to improve pupils' spelling and sentence construction, and the school realises the need to continue with this. By Year 6, pupils attain exceptionally high standards in the national tests. However, there is no complacency and the staff constantly strive for improvement. Standards in writing are currently not as high as those for reading, and the school is working to improve these.

Whilst both boys and girls attain standards that are well above those achieved nationally, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is marked, with girls doing considerably better than boys. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2. The school is already taking action to increase boys' interest throughout the school. Initiatives such as the recently revised curriculum, which is more creative, and the increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) are having a positive effect. The school recognises that this needs to continue.

The outstanding care, guidance and support contribute significantly to the pupils' good personal development. It ensures that all groups of pupils are very well supported. This means that pupils new to the school, including those who speak little English, are well supported so that they settle quickly. This enables them to make good and, sometimes, very good progress. Similarly, pupils who have learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented are also given excellent support to help them succeed both academically and in their personal development. The school's partnerships with other schools and institutions is outstanding and serves both to enhance pupils' well-being and to greatly enrich their learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and participate enthusiastically in healthy eating and exercise. Their behaviour is good, and frequent monitoring has improved behaviour in the playground. Pupils'

contribution both to the school and wider community is outstanding. They accept responsibility very readily, taking seriously their role in helping to protect the environment. Pupils feel that the very active student council enables them to influence developments in their school. They take responsibility for organising all aspects of social and fund-raising events and speak positively and knowledgeably about their contacts with schools in Africa. The skills developed through these activities, combined with the successful focus on basic skills, prepares pupils very well for later life.

A large majority of the parents speak very highly of the school, typically commenting that the school provides 'an excellent combination of dedication to learning and encouragement of ambition' and that they feel 'so fortunate to be in this school'. A small number of parents expressed concern about the school's readiness to accept parental views, but the inspection found that the school's procedures were comprehensive and that several changes had been made as a result of consultation with parents. Governors fulfil their roles well and have good understanding of, and involvement in, school improvement. They offer a good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher. The school has made significant improvements since its previous inspection. This, combined with recent improvements in standards and the curriculum, indicates that it has good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well managed and children are given a good start to their education. Parents express gratitude for the way that their children are helped to settle quickly, and comment on the high levels of care shown by the staff. When children are first admitted, the majority have skills that are better than those generally found in four-year-olds. Careful analysis of their skills and regular assessment of their progress helps the staff to cater for individual needs. This, combined with good teaching, enables the children to make good progress and many exceed most of the expected goals by the end of the year. In order to improve early writing skills, the staff are increasing opportunities for children to write and have revised how they teach letter names and sounds. They are also working closely with the teachers in Years 1 and 2 to improve the continuity of learning for the children when they leave the Foundation Stage, an area of concern for a few parents. The curriculum is broad and stimulating and resources are used well to provide experiences that cover all the areas of learning. There is a good balance between activities led by teachers and those chosen by the children themselves. Activities both indoors and outside also enrich the children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, especially in Years 1 and 2, paying particular attention to pupils' spelling and sentence construction.
- Improve boys' achievement in all subjects so that it is closer to that of the girls.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

3 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of SS Philip and James' Church of England Aided Primary School Oxford, Oxford, OX2 6AB

Thank you for welcoming me during my recent visit to your school. It was interesting to talk to you and to listen to your views about your school. You and your parents and carers think that you go to a good school and I agree.

Here are the things I liked most about your school:

- you do well in your learning and by, Year 6, you attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are higher than those attained in most schools
- your teachers make learning interesting and you told me that they are good at helping you to understand
- all of the staff take excellent care of you and support you very well and you told me that there is always somebody to turn to if you are worried or upset
- your teachers work very well with other schools and institutions in order to help you and to make learning more interesting
- you are really good at thinking of ways to make your school better and in getting involved in useful things like fund-raising
- you eat healthily in school, behave well and enjoy learning.

Your headteacher, teachers and governors are good at making your school better. There are two things I have asked them to think about to help them to do this by:

- improving your writing skills, especially in Years 1 and 2
- helping the boys to do as well as the girls.

You can help by trying your best. I hope you carry on enjoying school and learning many interesting things.

Best wishes

Vanessa Ward

Lead inspector