

Appleton Church of England (A) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123219
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314545
Inspection date	27 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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	138
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Alison Geary
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Watts
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Church Road Appleton Abingdon OX13 5JL
Telephone number	01865 862794
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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 how well leaders and managers at all levels fulfil their quest to be 'Leaders of Learning', why pupils make the progress they do and how well the school's climate for learning impacts on pupils' personal development.

The inspector met with staff, governors and pupils. Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires were examined, and school information was scrutinised. 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 where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Fewer pupils are eligible for free school meals than typically found. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds although a very few are from other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who need support for their dyslexic, moderate learning or behavioural needs, or who have a statement of special educational need is below that typically found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils flourish beyond the expectations of many parents because they are given, 'Wings to fly'. At its heart lies an extremely caring Christian ethos in which pupils are known inside out, cared for exceptionally well, achieve very high standards and develop very well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. As one parent wrote, 'This is a wonderful school. I am always amazed at how the dedicated staff extract talents I did not know my children even had'.

The success of the school stems from the headteacher's outstanding leadership and management. Her key aim that, 'Everything we do at Appleton is personalised to the learning needs of each individual pupil and ensuring they are happy and fulfilled during their time with us', is fully realised. Other leaders work extremely well as a team. Collectively they have provided a rich curriculum and exciting learning pervades all classes. Middle leaders have been empowered to innovate, lead change and ensure the curriculum constantly evolves. They do this extremely well. They are particularly successful in developing the teaching of other staff and ensuring that learning capitalises on pupils' interests. For example, in a recent science investigation the teacher had the confidence to change the focus of the lesson when some pupils wrongly thought that, 'Gravity does not act under water'. Middle leaders are also encouraged to help pupils extend the boundaries of learning by learning in many different ways. This really motivates pupils. Their rigorous monitoring of learning and pupils' progress ensure their action plans sustain high quality provision. Governors discharge their responsibilities extremely well and share the vision for the school. The school is kept in tip-top condition because of their support and challenge.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well regardless of their ability, gender or ethnicity. In this small school the headteacher and governors rightly focus on ensuring pupils make the very best progress they can as standards fluctuate according to the ability profile of each year group. From a broadly average starting point on entry, standards have been typically outstanding by the end of Year 2 in the past four years. They remain so this year. Progress is very strong in Years 1 and 2. Standards were very high at the end of Year 6 in 2007. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to reach even higher standards in English, mathematics and science. This highlights the very strong progress they have made from a high starting point in Year 2. Those who need support for their dyslexia or who have moderate learning or behavioural needs make particularly rapid progress. Teachers pinpoint their needs very early on and the high quality support they receive enables them to meet the very challenging targets set in their individual education plans. Progress in science is also impressive. All Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the higher level 5 because of the high priority given to investigations, vocabulary and addressing any misconceptions that crop up.

Several features contribute to this outstanding achievement. Most importantly, teaching and learning is consistently outstanding and never less than good. Teachers ensure pupils continually learn at the edge of their capabilities because, 'Significant steps in pupil's learning' are evaluated at the end of each day. This information influences next days teaching and helps teachers finely tune learning to the needs of each pupil. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is because teachers constantly talk to them about their targets. Very helpful comments in books also help them think through their next steps in learning. The teaching of 'linking letters to sounds' (phonics) has been a focus in Years 1 and 2 this year. This has helped pupils make even faster progress in their writing and spelling. The school

recognises there is scope to strengthen this further in Years 3 to 6 to fine tune pupils' writing and spelling skills, especially those of average ability.

The excellent climate for learning which pervades the school has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils work in a very calm but exciting environment in which they feel safe and valued. Their self-esteem is markedly high because teachers match learning so well to pupils' needs that they always experience success. Their achievements are constantly celebrated and pupils are not discouraged if they make a mistake. Unkind behaviour is almost unheard of and pupils' behaviour and manners are impeccable. This results from the clear codes of conduct and very good relationships between all adults and pupils. Pupils' excellent attendance shows how much they love coming to school. The extremely strong Christian focus in assemblies together with the very positive examples set by adults ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Outstanding links with the local community and with schools in other countries, including Uganda, ensure pupils' have a very strong awareness of their own and other cultures. Pupils say, 'We always have something exciting to do and like the mixed aged classes which allow us to always get hard work'. Pupils are very proud of the contribution they make to the life of the school such as the playground helpers and the work of the school eco-council. The 'Wake up - Shake up' exercise sessions held each morning, and the sight of the many pupils who use scooters or cycles to get to school reflects their excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles.

The headteacher ensures that is a relentless focus on the pursuit of excellence and says, 'We are always looking for better ways of doing things'. The capacity to improve is excellent and demonstrated by the continuing honing of provision and progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children see themselves as learners from the moment they start school. Extremely good induction procedures help them settle quickly into school routines. The atmosphere for learning, both indoors and outdoors is extremely positive. Children are encouraged to plan their own learning, work cooperatively and not to be afraid to make mistakes. For example, they worked together to explore snails which they discovered in the outdoor area and were creative with construction blocks which they got from the labelled storage boxes. Their paintings of the view from their windows at home and the progress they make in writing and sense of number are examples of some of the impressive gains they make. Children make very strong progress in all areas of learning but particularly so in their personal development, communication, language and literacy skills, knowledge and understanding of the word and creative development. This is because of the outstanding teaching, exciting curriculum, high quality care and first class day-to-day management of the class. The focus on phonics has also proved very beneficial this year. By the end of Reception, nearly all children have reached and many have exceeded the goals expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Target those pupils in Years 3 to 6 who would benefit from more phonics teaching.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
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?	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?	1
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	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

09 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Appleton Church of England (A) Primary School, Abingdon, OX13 5JL

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and letting me see your 'Wake up - Shake up' session. I would particularly like to thank those of you who told me about how the many exciting things you do in school and the progress you make.

You go to an outstanding school. I checked out many things about your school to come to this judgement and this is what I found.

- Your school has a very strong Christian ethos and your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Your behaviour and manners are impeccable and your parents and carers are very pleased with the school.
- The youngest children make an exceptionally strong start in the Reception class and see themselves as learners from the moment they start school.
- The combination of the excellent teaching, an extremely rich and well planned curriculum and your own keenness to learn means that you make very quick progress throughout the school and reach high standards in all subjects.
- Standards in science are particularly impressive.
- Those of you who need some extra help with your learning make especially strong progress and your personal and learning needs are met extremely well.
- One of the special things about your school is that the teachers treat you all as individuals and plan learning that is extremely well tailored to your needs.
- Staff who are in charge of a subject or who have other responsibilities are very successful in trying out new things that make your learning exciting.
- Your headteacher runs the school exceptionally well and makes sure the staff work extremely effectively as a team and every child matters.

Your headteacher is always looking for better ways of doing things. This year a stronger focus on helping the younger children link letters to sounds has proved to be a success. She is now keen to identify those of you in Years 3 to 6 who might benefit from this teaching to help with your spelling and writing.

I hope you enjoy coming to school, continue to work hard and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector