

Esher CofE Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125177
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315178
Inspection date	7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Caroline Andrews
Headteacher	Mr Alex Tear
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Milbourne Lane Esher KT10 9DU
Telephone number	01372 463 139
Fax number	01372 467 247

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	7 December 2007
Inspection number	315178

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

- Children's attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils' achievement and progress in English, mathematics and science.
- The impact of leadership, teaching and the curriculum on pupils' all round development. This included evaluation of how well learners develop skills that they need for success in their future lives.

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. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Evidence was gained from lessons and the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff and pupils and a range of documentation was evaluated. Pupils' work was scrutinised, especially in English and mathematics. The views of parents were gathered from questionnaires.

Description of the school

Esher Church of England School is a large primary school, which is regularly oversubscribed. The school serves a community in Surrey where there is very little social deprivation and only a very low proportion of pupils receive free school meals. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The next largest group includes those from Asian heritages and a few come from Chinese backgrounds. Only a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has fewer pupils with learning difficulties than most schools. The school has experienced stable leadership over the past seven years and following the arrival of a new headteacher in February, has a newly formed leadership team. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2006 and is now working towards achieving the Eco-School Award, Arts Mark and the information and communication technology (ICT) Mark.

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, which means that the school's aim of being excellent is fully met. Almost all parents agree and have great confidence in the school. They note such things as the, '...lovely sense of community...' and how they have been fortunate to be part of this, '...high achieving and happy school'. Pupils leave this school as well rounded, caring and informed citizens who contribute well to the community. This is enhanced by the strong Christian ethos and good care, which permeate the school and foster a culture of respect for all. Behaviour is good. The school is a friendly and inclusive place to be, where everyone is made to feel welcomed and valued.

Pupils make outstanding progress and, as a result, standards are exceptionally high by the end of Years 2 and 6. Parents are very supportive of their children and the school. Leaders, at all levels, are focused on helping pupils to gain strong basic skills in English, mathematics, science and ICT. All ability groups, including pupils of higher ability, succeed very well. For example, more than three quarters of pupils in Year 6 are working at very high levels (Level 5). Pupils with learning difficulties are nurtured, so that almost all reach at least average standards. The inspector agrees with the parent who commented that, 'Children are thriving because the staff are doing a superb job.'

All pupils do especially well in English; they read very well, enthusiastically discuss ideas and have superb opportunities to write in different styles. High quality leadership has made a particularly positive impact on English. All staff have been working to help pupils to edit and extend their writing using lively and often sensitive vocabulary. Pupils really value this, as one noted, 'Writing is really fun and interesting. I loved writing about the alien that landed on the playing field.' Others were very keen to tell the inspector about how they use the digital camera to take interesting pictures to make into stories, presentations and for use in research.

Pupils enjoy school and appreciate all that it has to offer. For example, one pupil said, 'The school has left a mark on me that I will always remember. I have gained confidence and learnt many new things'. Pupils benefit from an exciting, innovative curriculum and outstanding teaching. Pupils and the inspector agree they cover an amazing range of subjects resulting in outstanding learning. Pupils value the way that activities and teachers help them to think deeply and understand the world around them. Pupils do especially well at learning skills in ICT. This, when added to their very strong skills in English, mathematics and science, prepares them very well for the future. Pupils have appropriate individual targets in a wide range of subjects and this guidance helps them to make very good progress. Their progress is carefully tracked and regular support is provided to any who make slower progress. Most pupils behave very well and work hard. They are a credit to the school, their parents and themselves.

Links between subjects are excellent. For example, pupils know a great deal about life in the Himalayas and about the formation of mountains because of the links made between geography, art, design and technology, mathematics and English. The very good provision for creative arts helps pupils to sparkle and develop lively imaginations. The range of sport is good and helps pupils to develop fitness and teamwork, but pupils would like even more of this. Projects such as the 'Take one Picture' initiative are inspirational and help pupils to explore their emotions through art. Pupils are helped to learn in different ways and this means that all pupils are fully included in activities and quickly understand new ideas. This includes the few who speak English as an additional language. Class timetables have been carefully modified to ensure that pupils

can benefit from specialist teaching. Pupils enjoy many extra activities. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 engage in the weekly enrichment programme. This includes such things as chess, philosophy, sketching skills, mini bridge, creative puzzles. Pupils say that these activities help them to 'think deeply' and the inspector agrees. The 'Opening Minds-5Rs' project helps pupils to take responsibility, develop resilience and reasoning skills, resourcefulness and reflection.

Pupils learn many important skills for life, such as how to be safe in the world and how to be healthy. They are well cared for whilst at school. In particular, they know that regular attendance is very important, and attendance figures are excellent. Pupils work cooperatively when required and show respect for their teachers and each other. Parents and the inspector confirm that the school is a caring place. However, pupils and parents would like the toilets to be cleaner, with more soap and greater access to drinking water from cleaner fountains. Staff are very caring if pupils are poorly but the lack of a medical room means that they cannot easily lie down and rest if they are feeling unwell.

At the core of this highly successful school lies very strong leadership. As one teacher said, 'We always endeavour to improve.' Teamwork is especially strong and leaders at all levels have a clear vision to help pupils beyond the basic skills. The recent change in the leadership team has ensured that the past very high quality provision could be maintained and developed still further. There are imminent changes to the senior leadership team which will need time to embed so as capacity to improve is judged as good. Leaders set challenging targets to get even better results and are ambitious to raise the already high standards in mathematics to reach the very exceptional levels reached in English. Parents would also like mathematics to be even more challenging. Leaders have started work on this, especially by widening opportunities for real life problem solving and by increasing pupils' involvement in decision making. Governors are driving forward the development of a new building programme for the 'Eden Building' to extend the provision of the teaching of music and the performing arts. This is a very exciting initiative.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry is as expected for children of this age. As one parent commented, 'There is an excellent induction programme. My child settled from day one.' The 'Big Friend' project is a significant strength of the school, as it ensures that the youngest children quickly settle into school life and know that the older pupils will help and care for them. Children make good overall progress, especially in their personal development and in mathematics. A high proportion of children reach the expected goals by the time they join Year 1. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders have correctly identified a need to enliven the learning environment and to ensure that the most able children are further extended in their writing and in creative development.

What the school should do to improve further

As an outstanding school, leaders are ambitious to keep developing. With this in mind, they are already correctly focusing on:

- lifting the proportion of Level 5s in mathematics in Year 6, so as to raise the already very high standards in mathematics still further
- developing the Foundation Stage environment and helping the most able learners in the Foundation Stage to reach even higher levels in their writing and creative development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	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?	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?	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	2
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

18 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Esher CofE Aided Primary School, Esher, KT10 9DU

You may remember that a school inspector came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

Your school is outstanding, which means that it does many things especially well and there is very little that needs to be done to improve. This is because your headteacher, teachers, assistants and governors are working incredibly hard to make the school very special for you. Your teachers give you many exciting activities, which make learning fun and you work very hard at learning. This is outstanding and helps you to make very good progress. Clearly, you enjoy coming to school and like learning. I especially enjoyed the Year 4 assembly about mountains. I am very impressed by how you use computer technology to help you to research new things and make interesting links between subjects.

I know that you value being at a school that is caring and helps you to do well. You do very well in all of your subjects and this means that you learn important skills for the future. Your school ensures that you reach much higher standards than most other schools in the country in mathematics and science, and you do exceptionally well in English. This is because teachers help you to learn in different ways and they make sure that you learn new things quickly. Congratulations for enriching your skills such as chess, philosophy, sketching, mini bridge and by doing creative puzzles. These sound great fun and I agree with you that they help you to think deeply. Well done for behaving well and caring for the younger ones through your 'Big Friend' activities.

The adults are working amazingly well to keep improving things for you. We agree with them that they are already doing the right things by:

- working to get even more of you up to a very high level in mathematics
- making sure that learning areas and writing and creative activities are as challenging as possible in the Foundation Stage.

You can help them with this, by continuing to work hard. Well done! You are a great credit to your school, your parents and yourselves.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector