

Hilperton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126328
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315496
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Turner
Headteacher	Ruth Farrell
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Newleaze Hilperton Trowbridge BA14 7SB
Telephone number	01225 755343
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school which serves a village outside Trowbridge. Numbers vary year on year and all five classes include mixed-age groups. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and all speak English. The new headteacher has been in post less than a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is improving quickly. It already has a number of good features, including the positive impact made by the new headteacher. A significant number of parents commented appreciatively about improvements initiated in the last year. Pupils are happy here, developing into well mannered, confident young people as they move through the school. Academic progress is beginning to speed up and staff can now guide pupils towards achieving their targets because secure tracking systems and monitoring schedules are in place.

Children start school with skills broadly in line with national expectations, though they vary year by year. Their social skills are often strong and language skills weaker. Satisfactory progress in the Reception Year means that most enter Year 1 with good attitudes towards learning and secure basic skills. Achievement is satisfactory across the school, with areas where it is good, for instance in writing. This results from the school's recent focus on improving what was a weaker area. At the age of seven, current Year 6 pupils' standards were in line with national expectations and they remain broadly average now. Those who left school last year did well relative to their starting points. Current Year 5 pupils were above average when they were seven and are progressing as expected. Year 4 are achieving well in mathematics, where standards were low in their Year 2 tests. Pupils' weaker investigative skills in science are rightly targeted for improvement.

Personal development is good. Attendance is high and pupils behave well, showing respect for adults and for each other. Sensitive responses in assembly and in pupils' enjoyment of extra-curricular clubs and activities in class all show good development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Pupils are fit and healthy, enjoying 'Huff and Puff' exercise sessions at lunchtimes for instance.

The school's own self-evaluation is generally accurate, including its judgement of satisfactory teaching and learning. There have been some lengthy staff absences. These have been managed well but have inevitably caused the rate of learning to slow. Some teaching is good, particularly in lessons, or parts of lessons, where pupils work together or communicate interactively. However, the school has accurately identified that pupils are often too passive in lessons, so not all develop enough independence in learning.

The curriculum includes a recently improved range of extra-curricular activities which are appreciated by parents and pupils alike. Teachers provide properly for the needs of their mixed-age groups and plan effectively to make sure that work matches pupils' abilities. The school has maintained the strong pastoral care and support which was recognised at the last inspection. In addition, academic guidance has improved, so most pupils now know their targets and older ones are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is at a point of transition in these structures, as a new post of deputy headteacher for next term will alter the management accountabilities. The new headteacher's leadership is good, providing clear educational direction and drive, but at present, the school recognises that the effectiveness of middle management is an area for development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Strong emphasis on personal and social development promotes good enjoyment in learning. A proper balance between teacher-directed and child-selected work and play ensures that children experience a satisfactory variety of activity. A few parents commented about the impact of recent absence which necessitated temporary staffing, but this is now resolved. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and teaching assistants contribute well to all aspects of children's experience. Some lessons are rather overly prescribed and limit opportunities for children's early development of independence in learning. Resources are adequate, but the outside area, criticised in the last report, lacks cover and some areas are very muddy, restricting its potential as a good learning resource. Management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement, particularly in the investigative aspects of science.
- Extend the range of teaching styles to promote more independent learning.
- Clarify management roles and improve the effectiveness of staff with subject and other responsibilities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards on entry vary, but broadly match expectations. Achievement is satisfactory. Recently-set targets are more challenging and adults' understanding of pupils' potential is better because of the use of new tracking systems. This is leading to improved progress, with some good gains in knowledge and understanding amongst pupils in Years 4 and 5 this year. Focusing on problem-solving skills in mathematics has improved pupils' achievement recently. The school has rightly identified that similar work is needed on the investigative aspects of science to enable all pupils to fulfil their potential. Year 2 pupils are above average and Year 6 work shows an average range of competence, confirming the satisfactory progress they have made across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development remains good, as at the last inspection. Pupils speak enthusiastically about involvement in activities, including sports, which they understand as a vital part of health and fitness. The school council is active and participants were keen to discuss their role in selecting the new deputy headteacher. In this and other ways, pupils make a good contribution to school life, and secure links such as those with the Church extend their involvement into the wider community. Pupils echo strongly their parents' views that they feel safe and well looked after. Behaviour around the school is good and pupils are polite and considerate towards each other and to visitors. Pupils' very positive attitudes show that they have the potential to take more responsibility for learning independently than they often do. Secure basic skills and good teamwork provide a sound foundation for future phases of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn, listening carefully to teachers and others, with most eager to answer questions and to participate in lessons. Sometimes, though, too much control by teachers restricts the degree of involvement or independence which pupils could show for themselves. Here, pupils are quietly compliant, but a narrow range of teaching styles inhibits active learning. Where learning is good, it is because teachers provide more and better opportunities for pupils to be actively engaged in learning, capitalising on their very positive attributes and strengthening their individual contributions to lessons. Some marking of work is particularly evaluative and provides good advice about how to improve, but this is inconsistent and not all the marking is as helpful as this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, offering a well planned 'rolling' programme to ensure continuity and progression for pupils in different year groups within classes. Many useful withdrawals of individuals or groups, often taken by assistants, provide good support for lower attaining pupils so that they progress as well as others. Pupils talk excitedly about the fun they have on residential visits, and many participate enthusiastically in recently improved extra-curricular activity. Very good singing by boys and girls in the school choir is an example of this, and a good range of coaching in sports such as cricket helps keep pupils fit. The school seeks actively to present opportunities for pupils to experience aspects of cultural diversity, both within the curriculum and through work in activities such as art club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many parents choose the school because of its small size, which creates a valued, caring family atmosphere. The more abstract dimensions of pupils' lives are well supported by an ethos founded on Christian values, which staff promote strongly in assemblies and elsewhere. All staff place a high value on safeguarding pupils' welfare, which results in good relationships where children feel safe and can 'flourish', as one parent commented. This good pastoral support is now supplemented by a new and more rigorous system of academic guidance, where pupils mostly know their targets and receive suitable guidance about how to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

New leadership has heralded a different phase in the school's life, giving it 'new energy and verve', as one parent commented, encapsulating the views of many others. Parents are particularly pleased to feel more welcome and involved in school life, benefiting from improved communications. Many governors are new to their roles and keenly active in training for these. Experienced governors have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development, providing a good lead for others. At present, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. An identified need to strengthen and improve middle management has resulted in the new

senior appointment for next term, who will take a lead in this. The roles of subject and phase leaders, for instance, need development. New procedures are starting to raise achievement, but need to be implemented more consistently across the school. Good support for staff has enabled those new to teaching to develop well, and those returning after absence to settle back. Effective use of partnerships with other organisations ensures that vulnerable pupils are supported properly and that transition to secondary schools is successful.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hilperton Church of England VC Primary School, Trowbridge, BA14 7SB.

Thank you very much for making us so welcome in your school early in June. It was a pleasure to be there and I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Your school is satisfactory and is improving quickly. There are already some really good things about it. We found that you and your parents like everything which has got better recently and agree with you that the new headteacher is improving things well.

One thing which impressed us was your polite, friendly behaviour. We found that the way you listen to other children and to adults is very respectful, which makes classes calm and orderly. You work well together, talking sensibly in groups or pairs. We found that this more 'active' work is where you learn best, so we have asked teachers to do things like this in lessons. We feel that you can then learn better how to decide things more for yourselves. Your progress is satisfactory and it is beginning to speed up because teachers now check better how well you are doing. They are also beginning to tell you more about how to improve. Most of you know your targets, but some of you could begin to judge your own progress towards these.

You study a good range of different subjects and a lot of you are excited about all the extra-curricular clubs. These are really good for you, keeping you fit through sports, or singing really well, as I heard in the choir for instance – I enjoyed that! The staff work hard to keep you safe and happy, making sure you enjoy these and other events. Your learning is starting to get better and some of you are making really good progress in mathematics and writing. Staff know you need to get better at the experiments and investigations you do in science, so we have asked them to make sure this happens. We were really interested to hear about some pupils helping to select the new deputy headteacher. This will change things even more in the school and we feel sure you will help all the adults to make the school even better.

Thank you again for your welcome.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms Lead inspector