

Oliver Tomkins Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126440
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	315548
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Colin Lee

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Green
Headteacher	Elizabeth Wood
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
School address	Beaumaris Road Toothill Swindon SN5 8LW
Telephone number	01793 872100
Fax number	01793 872100

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although the proportion from minority ethnic groups has increased in recent years. The main first languages of these pupils are Turkish, Nepali and Polish. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. These pupils have a wide range of needs, often complex, including hearing impairment, speech and language needs and behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has some good features, such as pupils' good personal development and well-being and the high quality of care, guidance and support. The headteacher has worked hard and has successfully developed a real sense of teamwork. Staff work well together in the drive to raise standards and to improve pupils' achievement. Standards are rising, and have done so for several years, most notably in mathematics and science where they now exceed national averages at the end of Year 6. There is still work to do in English. Efforts to improve reading have been successful and the focus is rightly now on writing. Improvement is slower here because there is not enough emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but rates of progress vary between year groups, with most progress occurring in Year 6.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although there are examples of good and outstanding teaching that staff can emulate. Senior leaders monitor teaching closely and their guidance is helping many teachers to become more effective. Teachers usually make sure that pupils know the learning objectives for each lesson, although these are not referred to often enough as lessons progress. Target setting for pupils to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills is a fairly new initiative and pupils in some classes do not yet know their targets well enough. This means that pupils are not having sufficient opportunities to measure their own successes.

The curriculum is planned so that pupils are given learning activities that are suitably matched to their differing abilities. This enables pupils such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are particularly gifted or talented to experience appropriate challenge in their work. Strong emphasis is placed on pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education and this leads to their good personal development and well-being, exemplified in their enjoyment of school and their good attitudes in lessons. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles and of safe practices in and out of school is especially good. Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, inappropriate behaviour at play and lunchtimes by a small minority who have particular behavioural and social difficulties is not dealt with consistently. Nevertheless, pastoral care as a whole has many strengths and reflects teachers' strong commitment to meeting the social and emotional needs of pupils and their families.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Initiatives to improve pupils' achievement and standards in mathematics and science have proved successful, showing that there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement in the future. Senior leaders review pupils' progress periodically but the information about progress is not analysed accurately enough to show the short-term progress of individuals or the effectiveness of new methods or support programmes. The headteacher has led the way in developing successful partnerships with other schools, community organisations and outside agencies. The results are wide ranging, including improvements in attendance, smooth transfer for pupils entering and leaving the school at the usual times and a successful emphasis on the school as a community and as a member of local, national and international communities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase pupils' progress and raise their standards in writing through use of the whole curriculum for the development of writing skills and styles.

- Achieve greater consistency in behaviour management, particularly in situations where pupils are not directly supervised by teachers.
- Monitor pupils' progress through more frequent, detailed analysis and evaluation of their learning and use this information to check that teaching and extra support are being successful.

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

Pupils entering the school at the start of Year 3 reach average standards in reading and mathematics, but they are below average in writing. The standards of those joining later than Year 3 are usually below average overall. By Year 6, most pupils have made satisfactory progress. This reflects an improvement in achievement that has occurred steadily in the last three years and that has led to improved national test results in English, mathematics and science. The latest results were average in English and slightly above average in mathematics and science. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to match those standards and to meet the challenging targets that have been set for them.

Whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, there are variations in rates of progress between year groups and between subjects. Pupils make less progress in Years 3 and 4 than they do in Years 5 and 6, most noticeably in mathematics. Progress is particularly good in Year 6 because of consistently good teaching. Throughout the school, pupils make less progress in writing than in other areas. However, as a result of the current priority on writing standards are beginning to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy many aspects of school and join in with enthusiasm when given exciting things to do. Their attendance is improving and is satisfactory. They behave well in most lessons. However, there is some misbehaviour by a small number of pupils when they are not directly supervised by teachers. Pupils and parents say that there is some bullying at playtimes, and that this is not always noticed by staff. Older pupils chosen to be peer mediators and buddies try hard to do a good job by resolving minor disputes and encouraging friendliness.

Pupils have good knowledge of what it means to live healthily and a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe. School councillors are good at collecting the suggestions of pupils, discussing the possibilities and raising money to make things happen. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have for fund raising and working in and with the local community. Local people are full of praise for the pupils' efforts to clean up areas in the community such as a local park. Pupils are proud of the Community Award they received for this work. They have a satisfactory understanding of the varied faiths, cultures and traditions of British and international society. Their basic skills give them a satisfactory basis for their secondary education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are variations in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Where weaknesses are specific to individual teachers, effective monitoring and guidance by senior staff is gradually increasing these teachers' effectiveness. Teachers generally plan different learning activities for groups of pupils of different abilities. Inconsistencies in teachers' methods for checking pupils' progress during lessons, to establish the levels of their knowledge and understanding, mean that errors or misunderstandings are not always spotted soon enough. Where teachers have an accurate picture of pupils' progress in lessons, they set suitable short-term targets. This helps pupils with their learning, particularly in acquiring basic literacy skills. Teachers generally provide an overview of the main things to be learned during the lesson, but these are not referred to often enough while pupils work. This leaves some pupils unsure of what they have been asked to do or of how it is going to help their learning. In some classes pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning and progress at the end of lessons, but this practice is inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils are taught a broad, balanced curriculum that includes French in all year groups. Many aspects of the curriculum are used successfully to promote aspects of personal development such as knowledge about healthy lifestyles and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school plans to make learning more exciting and interesting for pupils and is doing this by linking subjects together in topics whilst still retaining a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The planning of opportunities for literacy skills to be applied and developed in topic work and other subjects has been completed but is not being implemented sufficiently. There is better use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, resulting in good ICT skill development. The curriculum is enriched well by regular educational visits, theme days and weeks, and there is a satisfactory range of clubs providing learning opportunities outside the school day. Attendance at these activities varies.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of pastoral care is one of the school's strengths. Safeguarding is taken seriously and all the necessary procedures, policies and records are in place. The school works well with outside agencies to provide good support for pupils with specific difficulties or disabilities. The lack of external support to assist provision for pupils with English as an additional language requires the school to plan its own provision and it does so satisfactorily, enabling the pupils to progress as well as their peers. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good support from the coordinator, teachers and teaching assistants. Those with social and emotional problems have good opportunities to share their problems. Pupils have recently been set targets in literacy and numeracy but many do not remember what they are and teachers make little reference to them in lessons. This limits the effect that target setting has on the quality of learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision of where and how the school can improve. This has led to a range of measures being introduced to improve pupils' achievement and standards. Observations of teaching and scrutinies of pupils' work lead to effective guidance being given to staff on where and how improvement can be achieved. Staff work closely together on issues such as curriculum development and the promotion of pupils' personal development. Their collective self-evaluation accurately identifies areas for development, such as making the curriculum more stimulating and getting consistency in behaviour management. Some judgements on effectiveness are flattering as they were made before initiatives had been in place long enough for their impact to be evaluated.

Information from testing and assessment about pupils' standards and progress is used satisfactorily to identify those not reaching the levels predicted for the end of each year. This focuses teachers' attention on individuals or groups that need additional support. However, data are not analysed in sufficient detail to get a really accurate picture of the rates of progress of different groups of pupils or to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes such as those introduced to provide additional support. Pupils' involvement in the local community and their satisfactory understanding of world faiths and cultures mean that the school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. There is a carefully planned programme of monitoring and evaluating other aspects of the school's work and of checking on the progress of priorities in the annual school improvement plan. Governors are becoming more involved in this planning and are developing their procedures for independently reviewing the school's work. Consequently, they are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school's performance and starting to provide both support and appropriate challenge to senior staff.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

7 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Oliver Tomkins C of E Junior School, Swindon SN5 8LW

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking with us so willingly. We thoroughly enjoyed joining you in lessons and seeing you at work. We have said that your school gives you a satisfactory education overall and that some things are good. These are things that we particularly appreciated.

- Most of you make at least satisfactory progress in your learning and those of you in Years 5 and 6 make good progress.
- Many of you behave well in lessons, although a few pupils are not behaving well enough at play and lunchtimes.
- You understand well the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
- You say how much you enjoy the opportunities you have to take on responsibility, such as being a school councillor, a peer mediator or a playground buddy, and this is a good contribution to the life of the school.
- You make a very good contribution to your local community, and this is appreciated by people in the neighbourhood.
- All the adults do a good job in looking after you and making sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The headteacher and all the adults, including the governors, are working hard to improve the school.
- We have three recommendations to help your school to get even better:
- You must continue to improve your progress and standards in writing, and having more opportunities to practise writing in other subjects will help this.
- All adults must have the same high expectations of how you should behave, and all of you must behave well at all times.
- Your progress must be checked thoroughly in order to find out what helps you most in your learning.

We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Oliver Tomkins C of E Junior School to be an even better school.

Yours faithfully

Colin Lee

Lead inspector