

Winchcombe Abbey Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132782
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	316014
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Greenhalgh

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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Edwards
Headteacher	Andrew Meller
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Back Lane Winchcombe Cheltenham GL54 5PZ
Telephone number	01242 602447
Fax number	01242 602447

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of pupils in writing, the achievement of boys, pupils' current academic progress, the systems for setting challenging targets and the pupils' personal development and well-being. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, analysis of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, meetings with the headteacher, governors and staff, an analysis of the school's tracking and assessment data and scrutiny of school documentation. The views of parents were gathered from the returns of the Ofsted questionnaire. Other aspects of the school 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 form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average sized primary school. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and of these, a very low proportion are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average but does vary from year to year. It has declined since the last inspection when it was broadly average. The present headteacher started at the school at the beginning of this term. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2006 and the Investors in People Award in 2005.

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 is providing a satisfactory standard of education, with some good and outstanding features. Children make a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development but unsatisfactory progress in writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and attain standards above the national averages. There is a variation in standards and progress across subjects. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good progress in reading and science, satisfactory progress in mathematics and unsatisfactory progress in writing. Pupils underachieve in writing and Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and especially so for boys who generally have less positive attitudes to writing than do the girls. There have been weaknesses in writing because of a lack of consistency and depth in the quality of teaching and assessment and a lack of opportunity for most pupils to complete long pieces of writing. The new headteacher has put a significant focus on writing during this term. There are good signs that teaching and learning in writing are improving. There is a significant focus on assessing pupils' writing regularly and teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to complete longer pieces of writing in different subjects.

Pupils very much enjoy school. Their behaviour and movement around the school are outstanding. Pupils are very confident and develop excellent relationships with each other and with adults. Levels of attendance are similar to the national average. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to live healthily. They take regular exercise in and out of school and thoroughly enjoy physical activities, such as 'Shake and Wake' sessions at the start of the day. Pupils feel very safe in school and are very confident that they can talk to members of staff if they have any worries and concerns. Child protection procedures and regular risk assessments are in place. Pupils make a good contribution to the day-to-day running of the school and enjoy their responsible roles as play leaders and school councillors. They are keen to contribute to the local and wider communities. They perform plays and sing to local residents, as well as giving to local and international charities. Their economic well-being is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress overall in literacy and numeracy skills. Parents are very positive about the school, and the level of staff support for pupils is particularly appreciated. A typical comment from parents was, 'From the headteacher to the lollypop lady everyone genuinely cares about all the children.'

New systems to assess the quality of pupils' work, which has been an inconsistent feature in the school in the past, are improving. Teachers are developing a good awareness amongst pupils of what they need to do to improve. As a result, pupils are increasing their own skills of assessment and talk articulately about where they need to improve their work. Good support from teaching assistants is evident throughout the school for groups of pupils who need additional support. There are good opportunities for pupils to do role-play throughout Key Stage 1. A good example was with Year 2 pupils who were involved in Santa's Workshop, creating jobs and carrying out tasks to ensure there were sufficient toys for children at Christmas time. This was an excellent opportunity for pupils to develop key organisational and teamwork skills. Teachers develop strong relationships with pupils and provide good one-to-one and group support. The curriculum is planned well and there are many displays of interesting work across a wide range of subjects. Art and design comes through strongly and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities in the sports and arts and pupils attend residential visits in the Forest of Dean and Devon. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education.

The headteacher has instilled a sense of rigour and a focus into school improvement. Good self-evaluation procedures are now in place, the weaknesses in writing pinpointed and some effective action has already been taken. There is a clear sense of direction. There is a good school development plan with a particular focus on raising standards in writing. The headteacher is very knowledgeable about what makes outstanding practice and is well supported by the senior leadership team and subject leaders. Staff morale and relationships are strong. The governors play a satisfactory part in school improvement. They are beginning to ask searching questions of the senior leadership team. Good analysis of data takes place and there is a robust data tracking system. This clearly identifies the progress pupils make and what they need to do to improve. The targets set for present Year 6 pupils are quite rightly under review because the new headteacher does not agree that they are sufficiently challenging, particularly in mathematics. The school has good links with local schools and the Church and pupils make a smooth transition from playgroups and into secondary school. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory but good improvement this term demonstrates that the school is well placed to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle into school quickly. Parents appreciate this, saying things like, 'My son runs to school each morning and comes home happy and keen to demonstrate what he has learnt that day.' Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and satisfactory progress in all other areas of learning, apart from their writing skills, especially the boys', which are unsatisfactory because the children do not have enough writing practice. There have been good improvements in the outdoor learning facilities since the last inspection, which are now excellent. The curriculum is developing well, especially in terms of the introduction of the 'forest curriculum', which thoroughly excites the children especially when they explore different areas in the woodland. There are good procedures to make a smooth transition into school and relationships with the local playgroups are good. A typical comment from parents was that 'the whole induction process was so reassuring'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of the quality of assessment and the opportunities pupils have to complete longer pieces of writing to raise standards in writing.
- Improve the overall progress made by boys, especially in writing, so that it matches the progress made by girls.
- Review the targets for the present Year 6, particularly for mathematics, to ensure they are sufficiently challenging.

A small proportion of schools whose 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.

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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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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	3
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Winchcombe Abbey Church of England Primary School, Winchcombe,
Gloucestershire GL54 5PZ

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I was very impressed with how friendly and polite you were and I particularly want to thank members of the school council who spent part of their lunchtime with me.

Your school is a satisfactory school with some good and some outstanding features.

You make good progress with your reading and in science. You get on alright in mathematics, but right through the school you are not making enough progress in your writing. Your teachers already know that they need to ask you to do longer pieces of writing more often. You could also help your teachers by looking more carefully at what they tell you about how to improve. Children settle into Reception very quickly and I was pleased to see how well the children there got on with one another.

Your personal development is good. I was very impressed by your behaviour and the safe way you move around school. You are very confident and have excellent relationships with each other and with adults. You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives. This is because the school provides you with many sporting activities to do and healthy food to eat at lunchtimes. You very much enjoy lessons and the extra activities given to you during lunchtimes and after school. You make good contributions towards how the school is improving through the work of the school council.

The headteacher, staff and governors work well together. They know the strengths of the school and the areas that need improving. They have a very good plan in place to ensure the school does improve. I have asked the school to have higher expectations about how much you can achieve, especially in writing and mathematics, and to set more challenging targets for you.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Greenhalgh Lead inspector