

Hazlemere Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110462
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325152
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	253
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Corris
Headteacher	Mr Nick Waldron
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Amersham Road Hazlemere High Wycombe HP15 7PZ
Telephone number	01494 521 420

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2008
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Fax number

01494 761 703

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils are of White British origin, with about 10% from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils have English as an additional language, although none is at an early stage of learning English. A below-average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities; these include pupils with communication or behavioural problems and some who find learning difficult. The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in a Reception class and also in a Nursery, where children attend on a part-time basis.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hazlemere Church of England Combined School provides a good quality education. Pupils enjoy learning, achieve well and reach above-average standards. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent's comment summarised numerous positive remarks, 'There is a very supporting ethos at the school...teaching staff have lots of good ideas about how to make learning fun and relevant, and their enthusiasm is seized on by the children.' The school has improved significantly since the last inspection and especially since the appointment of the headteacher 18 months ago. One parent's comment, that 'the headteacher has breathed new life into the school', was reiterated by many parents, staff and pupils.

The rate of achievement through the school has accelerated due to improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils enjoy school and progress well because teachers make every effort to engage pupils, stimulate their interest and build on their prior attainment. Teachers and support staff work in close partnership. In most lessons work is set according to pupils' different levels of ability, although the school is aware that the most able pupils are not always fully challenged.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school is highly successful in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, fulfilling its mission to help pupils 'grow in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men'. Pupils are extremely knowledgeable about how to keep themselves healthy and they respond to the school's encouragement to eat a balanced diet and take plenty of exercise. They willingly take on responsibilities such as house and games captains and as school councillors. The school positively encourages pupils to be involved with the local community and there is an extremely strong association with the parish. Links with schools in France and Kenya successfully promote pupils' awareness and understanding of the wider world. Given pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour, pupils do not always show high levels of independence and initiative.

Pupils are well looked after and the school provides a safe and secure environment in which they feel happy. They respond well to a good range of learning opportunities, which help them pursue a wide range of interests. Learning is brought to life through special events such as the recent 'alien spacecraft crash' on the school field. Pupils from Reception to Year 6 were involved in investigating and reporting the events with the cooperation of the local police, press and drama students in their role as government investigators.

Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, there is a strong sense of energy and purpose throughout the school that is leading to rapid improvement. With the dedicated support of the deputy headteacher and subject leaders, governors ensured that the school kept on track during a period of turbulence when there was a succession of temporary headteachers. Given the school's progress in recent years, it shows a good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress and achieve well. They enter the school with standards which are slightly above those expected for their age. By the time they enter Year 1, their attainment in all areas of learning is above that which is expected nationally.

All adults work well together as a team, and in the Nursery they prioritise settling children with clear routines and by encouraging them to work and play safely together. Children's welfare

and personal and social development are considered to be paramount and prompt action is taken to address any health and safety concerns. Adults and children interact well and children's language and vocabulary is developed through conversation and good questioning. Children enjoy playing in the role play areas, collaborate well in the workshop and use resources appropriately. In the Reception class the strong emphasis on teaching letter sounds has resulted in good progress in both reading and writing. Interesting activities reinforce learning and enjoyment is evident.

Children learn to become independent from the outset and benefit from a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The attractive outdoor areas are being used to support all areas of the curriculum, although they are not as stimulating or challenging as the indoor areas. They do not have signs and labels to reinforce learning.

The EYFS is presently led and managed well by the headteacher, who has improved the quality of provision and has supported staff with appropriate training. A new, highly experienced, manager will be in post at the beginning of next term.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of the most able pupils by ensuring the level of work is consistently challenging.
- Capitalise on pupils' positive attitudes to further promote their independence and confidence in using their initiative.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress through the school and reach above-average standards in English, mathematics and science. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when standards and rates of achievement were broadly average. Particularly good headway has been made in improving standards in mathematics over the last three years. For example, several pupils in Year 4 are confidently tackling work usually covered in Years 5 and 6. A strong focus on improving standards in writing has borne fruit and some exceptionally good writing was seen in Years 5 and 6. In a poem about Miss Havisham from Dickens's 'Great Expectations', one wrote:

The old woman, transfixed by what she sees,
No love or emotion shows through her leathery
withered skin...

The proportion of pupils on course to reach the higher levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above average. However, the school's careful tracking of achievement suggests that there is potential for increasing this proportion further and this is rightly a current school priority. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported both in the classroom and when working individually. As a result, they make good progress towards their individual targets, often reaching the levels expected for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school, and contribute to the happy, purposeful atmosphere. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils'

spiritual development was evident in their sensitive writing about the Second World War. Among many similar examples, one Year 6 pupil, describing the experiences of a fire-fighter, wrote:

Before my watering eyes the burning flames flood the midnight sky, Across the glowing skyline, crackling timbers fall...

The Bishop of Buckingham, after participating in a remembrance service led by pupils, commented, 'What really shone through was the depth of thinking and reflection behind the poems, songs and presentations.' Pupils develop an excellent knowledge and understanding of different cultures. They talked positively about their experiences during Black History Week and made sensitive comments on the customs of a wide range of cultures, for example, when explaining the tradition of using beads for communication in Zulu communities. Pupils' self-confidence and secure skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) provide a good base for their future education. Teachers do not always capitalise on pupils' mature attitudes, which means that their cooperative skills are not as fully developed as they might be and they are not always able to initiate ideas.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teaching is lively and interesting. Lessons move at a good pace because the teaching is confident and the teacher has a very clear view of what needs to be learnt and explains this to the pupils. Some teaching inspires pupils to be original and creative. For example, during an English lesson, Year 6 pupils were motivated by the teacher's enthusiasm and supported by clear technical guidance to produce writing of high quality. The skilled teaching assistants play an important part in many lessons, and frequently take a leading role in supporting small groups within and outside the classroom. Staff have worked hard to improve pupils' learning and build on their positive attitudes. Teachers routinely set class and group targets for pupils, and classroom displays provide useful prompts for learning, such as exemplars of high-quality writing. Pupils are generally clear about what constitutes good work, although there is some inconsistency in the extent to which they know their individual targets for improvement. Occasionally, pupils spend too long as a whole class listening to the teacher or in class discussions before starting more productive independent work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum strongly reflects the school's values, providing a wide range of learning opportunities that pupils enjoy. These opportunities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The school understands its community well and ensures that pupils broaden their horizons. Lessons have included exploration of art, stories and games from a variety of cultures, giving pupils of all ages insights into the global community. Extra-curricular activities address a wide variety of interests and include opportunities to extend skills in ICT, for which there is a high take-up, and to be involved in physical activities. Staff make a high level of commitment to this provision. The organisation of provision for different groups is effective in meeting their needs. This was evident, for example, in Years 2 and 3, where the teachers planned activities at various levels on the same theme and deployed teaching assistants effectively to support different groups. The school has identified the need to develop the

curriculum further to provide more challenge for the more able pupils, and this is reflected in its strategic planning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff have a high level of commitment to pupils' welfare and to encouraging them to enjoy and achieve in school. A parent commented, 'I feel very blessed to have my children in such a caring school environment.' Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and the school provides a secure environment in which pupils feel well cared for. The more vulnerable pupils and their families receive effective support and the school works well with other agencies to ensure pupils make good progress in both academic work and personal development. Where needed, the school works closely with individual pupils and their families to ensure good attendance. The school's systems for academic guidance do not consistently give pupils a clear enough idea of what to aim for next, although there are examples, such as in English with older pupils, where clear, precise guidance enables them to make particularly good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has successfully shared his vision, and the school's leadership is fully focused on raising standards and achievement in an environment that reflects the school's core values. There is a common sense of purpose and the school has a good understanding of its strengths and what it needs to improve. This is based on an accurate analysis of performance that has led to a clear plan of action. The strategies used are too recent to show their full impact, but already the focus on raising achievement in mathematics and writing is leading to rapid improvements. The school deploys its staff and resources well to support all groups of pupils, but recognises that the more able are not consistently challenged. Governors show a good understanding of the school. Their confidence in making key strategic decisions has ensured the school's continued development. The appointment of a governor responsible for promoting community cohesion has had a good impact on this aspect of the school's work.

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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?	2
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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

08 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hazlemere Church of England Combined School, High Wycombe, HP15 7PZ

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You told us how much you enjoy being there and we agree with you that it is a good school. The headteacher and staff work very hard to keep you safe and happy. You get the help and support you need to learn and achieve well. You reach good standards in your work and we particularly enjoyed reading the stories and poems you have written. You learn well about people in other cultures, and this gives you a much better understanding of the lives of people in other countries, such as children in the school in Kenya with which Hazlemere has links. You know how to stay safe and healthy, behave and get on well together; we think that sometimes you need more opportunities to make decisions and show your independence. Occasionally the work is not challenging enough for some of you.

The school wants to continue getting even better, and to help it do this, we have asked the school to:

- give those of you who find the work easier new challenges, so that you make even more progress
- find ways to help you use your independence and to take more of a lead in activities both in and out of lessons.

You can help the school by setting yourselves challenging targets and by taking every opportunity to show initiative.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector