

Dr Walker's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Fyfield

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115125
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326129
Inspection date	12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathleen Yates

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	144
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	Dr Simon Baker
Headteacher	Mrs Noreen Stoker
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Walker Avenue Fyfield Ongar Essex CM5 0RG
Telephone number	01277 899298

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	12 March 2009
Inspection number	326129

Fax number

01277 899814

Age group 4–11

Inspection date 12 March 2009

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

- The progress pupils make in mathematics and writing across the school.
- The strengths in pupils' personal development and well-being and the care, guidance and support pupils receive.
- How effective the school's leaders and managers are in contributing to rigorous self-evaluation in order to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards and achievement.

Evidence was gathered from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation and records of pupils' attainment and progress. Discussions were held with governors, senior staff and pupils. An analysis of the responses to the parents' questionnaire was also taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British origins with few from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no children who are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. No pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of one Reception class. Children start in this class with knowledge and skills that are broadly at the levels expected for their age.

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's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. There are good features to its work. Across the school, effective pastoral care and support, and a positive welcoming atmosphere help to ensure good personal development and well-being for pupils. The school works well in partnership with parents, the community and outside agencies. The views of pupils and parents are regularly sought and acted upon so that everyone feels valued.

Children in Reception get off to a good start and achieve well because of good teaching and an interesting range of activities. Pupils currently in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress. While standards are consistently lower in mathematics than in English, including writing, and science, the school has maintained broadly average standards overall since the last inspection. The exception to this was in 2007 when standards were above average. The pupils in this year group also attained above average results when they were assessed as seven-year-olds. Their achievement over time was therefore satisfactory. There has been some underachievement in Key Stage 1 in the recent past, particularly in mathematics, where pupils did not meet their targets. Initiatives recently put in place are starting to address this dip in standards.

Progress is now satisfactory for most pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although there is good teaching in some classes this is not consistent throughout the school and means that a smaller number of pupils reach both the expected and the higher levels than should be the case, especially in mathematics at both key stages. All staff have received training and support from subject leaders and outside agencies to increase their subject knowledge and teaching expertise. The school recognises an identified need to put in place a systematic and effective programme of monitoring by senior management to ensure improvements in teaching are consistently implemented.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is only satisfactory, mainly due to holidays taken during term time by a significant minority of families. Pupils are friendly, polite, relate well to others and enjoy their learning. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and the importance of healthy diets. The awards of the Activemark and the District Sports Shield celebrate their achievements in physical fitness. Pupils of all ages readily take on a range of responsibilities and work together harmoniously. There are many examples of how the school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion both at home and abroad. Pupils' achievement in basic numeracy and literacy skills prepares them satisfactorily for their future lives.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. Relationships are warm and there is a good climate for learning. In good lessons, pupils achieve well because the content is related to everyday experiences and pupils have work which is well matched to their prior learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, the lessons are less engaging and a lack of an effective match of work and insufficient challenge is common so that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Classrooms and corridors are bright and attractive and celebrate pupils' work. Teaching assistants are deployed well and interact effectively with pupils to help them get the most from their lessons, particularly those who find learning difficult. Pupils are becoming more confident in assessing their work. Presentation of pupils' work has been inconsistent but is improving.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development, through lessons such as circle time and citizenship and this helps pupils to become respectful of others and their environment.

The school has worked hard to make the curriculum more interesting and this has increased pupils' enjoyment in learning. For example, pupils gain first hand experience of woodland creatures and the weather and environment come alive through good use of the outdoor classroom and the Woodland Trust area. Pupils enjoy and participate well in a wide range of exciting enrichment activities which include sport, art and music. They benefit from the expertise of an artist in residence and professional sports coaches, as well as the superb school grounds. Parents are very appreciative of the additional opportunities offered to their children.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Good levels of pastoral care ensure that pupils work and play in a safe environment. They receive good support in their personal development so that they feel happy about sharing any worries or problems with staff. All safeguarding requirements are met. In their response to questionnaires, parents wrote warmly of the 'extra mile' the school goes to in looking after their children's needs, including their vigilance when caring for children who have medical problems. The school works hard to promote better attendance and to encourage parents to ensure their children do not miss any opportunities to further their learning. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Learning targets are in place, but while some pupils know how to improve their work others do not. Pupils understand the marking system and this helps them to have a clear understanding of how well they are doing but there is insufficient information given to pupils on a regular basis as to how to improve their work.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher is held in high esteem by staff, governors and parents. She has been the instigator of many improvements to the environment from which both staff and pupils benefit. She has a clear vision as to the improvements still to be made. The school improvement plan is focused on increasing enjoyment but it is not sufficiently sharply focused on raising levels of achievement in the core subjects. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate. Leaders and managers are developing their ability to use data and assessment information to track the performance of individual children. Senior management does not allocate sufficient time to ensure that lessons learned from the evaluation of this data are consistently incorporated into planning for pupils' needs. Governors are supportive and ensure the budget is wisely spent. They are keen to take up training in order to sharpen their skills in interpreting data so that they can monitor and evaluate the school more effectively. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The school's capacity to improve is also satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Very good liaison with pre-school settings and comprehensive induction procedures ensure children settle happily in the Reception class where their welfare is promoted well. Parents are correct when they say that 'learning is fun' and that their children love being in this class. This is because relationships are positive and the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. All staff have a good understanding of the needs of the children. Consistently good and occasionally outstanding teaching and well-planned activities create many good learning opportunities for children where they move freely from the indoor to the well-resourced outdoor area. Children make good progress across all areas of learning. Leadership and management are good. Staff make careful assessments of children's learning and use the information well to plan the next steps in learning. A good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities result in good learning and development for all abilities. As a result, most children reach, and some exceed, the levels expected by the time they move into Year 1. Staff are forging further links with the Year 1 class to ensure the new teacher has

a clear understanding of exactly where children are in their learning so that no time is lost when they move up.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in mathematics by ensuring there is an appropriate degree of challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in Years 1 to 6.
- Ensure that the senior management team has sufficient time to monitor and evaluate the success of curriculum initiatives designed to raise achievement.
- Ensure that the school development plan is sharply focused on the key priorities for raising achievement.

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.

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

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?	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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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?	3

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?	2
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

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dr Walker's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Fyfield, CM5
ORG

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave to my colleague, Mr Hewett, and me when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons. Your views were very helpful in giving us a picture of your school.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- Your behaviour is good and you like learning new things.
- You work willingly; enjoy having fun and taking responsibility.
- You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves and others well.
- The school is a welcoming and pleasant place to be in.
- The staff take good care of you.
- You participate in a good range of additional activities, including clubs.
- Those of you in the Reception class make good progress.

These are some things the school can work on to make it better.

- Ensure that teachers help you to make more progress and reach higher levels, especially in mathematics.
- Make sure that for those of you in Years 1 to 6, teachers challenge you more so that learning moves on at a quicker pace.
- Leaders and managers are going to produce plans which show exactly how achievement is to be raised.
- Leaders and managers are going to make regular checks to ensure that new ways of teaching the curriculum work well.

Thank you once again for making us so welcome. Please keep up your enthusiasm for learning and come to school as often as you can. We wish you well for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kathleen Yates

Lead inspector