

Malvern Wells CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116902
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	326480
Inspection date	7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	102
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	Jim Pawson
Headteacher	Kevin Clough
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	263 Wells Road Malvern WR14 4HF
Telephone number	01684 561179
Fax number	01684 891245

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the progress children are making in the Early Years Foundation Stage and what standards are they reaching by the time they start in Year 1
- whether pupils are making sufficient progress in writing
- the effectiveness of measures taken to improve the role of subject coordinators.

Evidence was gathered from: discussions with leaders, the chair of governors, pupils, parents and staff; visits to all classes; scrutiny of pupils' work; observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime; and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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 this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Almost all pupils are White British and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in a mixed-age class with some Year 1 pupils. The previous headteacher left in December 2008 and his successor has been off on sick leave since February 2009. The school is currently being led by the headteacher of another school, who spends two days each week at Malvern Wells.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The staff, governors and acting headteacher have done remarkably well to maintain standards and quality during the difficult time without a headteacher. Although a few parents expressed concerns about the lack of leadership, the vast majority were extremely positive, saying such things as: 'The way in which the teachers and governors have managed the absence of the headteacher is particularly impressive' and 'From the perspective of our child's education and experiences at school, there has been no visible effect as a result of the headteacher's absence.' In particular, the governing body, and especially the chair, has been extremely effective in managing the difficulties and, as several parents recognise, 'enabling the teachers to get on with teaching'. Parents are particularly positive about the way they have been kept informed by the governors about all necessary changes.

One of the key strengths of the school is pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Their behaviour is exemplary and they show very high levels of concern for others. Many examples were observed of pupils sensitively supporting each other. They are developing a very mature and responsible approach to work practices, not only working extremely well in pairs or small groups, but gaining excellent independent research skills. This, along with their excellent development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills and very good basic literacy and numeracy, is preparing them exceptionally well for their futures. Pupils are adopting safe and healthy lifestyles extremely well. They put into practice their very good knowledge and take lots of exercise and eat healthily. They are also very conscious of potential risks and carry out their own risk assessments from an early stage in the school.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as reflected in their outstanding attendance. As one parent, reflecting a typical view, said, 'There is a very positive atmosphere, with happy, enthusiastic children running into school every morning.' Pupils make a splendid contribution to the community. They willingly and keenly volunteer for tasks around the school, for instance helping younger children at breaks. They are very involved in the church and local community, the choir being invited to sing at a wide range of local events, including a recent wedding. Considerable funds are raised for those in need further afield. For example, through the church the school has a link with a gypsy camp in the Ukraine and pupils are able to talk knowledgably about how their money is used there.

This excellent personal development and well-being is a result of outstanding care, guidance and support. All pupils and their circumstances are extremely well known by all staff, and children therefore feel safe and secure and confident that their concerns will be listened to and understood. At the time of the inspection all statutory safeguarding and health and safety requirements were in good order. The school recognises the need to develop its systems for academic guidance. Teachers have very good knowledge of pupils' levels of skills and understanding and are giving them clear targets to help them improve. However, formal systems to establish these levels and record them regularly to give an overview of pupils' progress are not so well developed.

Children enter school with levels of skills and knowledge that are generally above those expected for their age in most areas of learning. They make a good start in Reception as a result of effective provision. They make good progress and reach securely above average standards by the time they start in Year 1. This good progress continues through the rest of the school and

in some subjects, history, art, ICT and music for example, it is outstanding. Pupils' achievement is good and by the time they leave from Year 6, they reach standards that are significantly above average. They are particularly high in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing, while still above average, are quite a bit lower in almost all year groups and pupils make less progress in writing than in reading, for example. The school has recognised this and work is under way to raise standards in writing.

The key reason for pupils' good progress is good teaching. Lessons are typified by excellent relationships and lively learning. Pupils are keenly engaged in their work and teachers have good questioning skills, which draw out pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants provide good support, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and enable them to make the same progress as their classmates. Because systems of assessment are not yet securely embedded, teachers do not always take pupils on from their current levels of learning as effectively as they could. The curriculum has been designed to be interesting and engaging and pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the wide range of visits that add first-hand experiences to their learning. The school has established a good link with a culturally diverse school in Birmingham but recognises the need to develop a curriculum project with this school to give greater focus to the link.

It says much for the team spirit and shared leadership of the school that there has been minimal disruption to normal routines and pupils' learning during the last six difficult months. Systems of self-evaluation have built an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, until recently staff have not been fully involved in the process of monitoring the effectiveness of provision for their areas of responsibility. A good start has been made and the school is working to develop this further. The very positive links that have been built with parents have helped during the uncertainties as they are almost unanimously supportive. Excellent links have also been established with other providers, for instance links with a nearby international college allow pupils to meet students of a similar age from all around the world. The facilities of the college, including a large performance hall, sports hall and sports fields, are also used well to benefit provision for pupils.

The religious education group of the governing body has developed a good plan to enhance the promotion of community cohesion and there are a number of areas of good practice already in place. The links with the school in Birmingham and the camp in the Ukraine are examples of this. Due to the hard work of all concerned, the acting headteacher, staff and governors, there has been minimal loss of momentum to the school's development despite the uncertainties in leadership. The school is well placed to continue its drive for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the excellent provision for their well-being and welfare. They make good progress in all other areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle quickly because of the very close links that are built with parents and because they have opportunities to become familiar with the setting before they start school. Children have extremely good attitudes to learning, behave impeccably and work and play very well together. They enjoy a rich curriculum, which makes good use of both their own outside area and the wider locality.

Teaching is good and teamwork amongst the staff is good. A good balance of activities is planned, including those led by an adult and those children choose for themselves. These

activities are planned to interest the children and great enjoyment was observed when children were making their teddy bear-shaped sandwiches for their teddy bear's picnic. A good system for developing children's awareness of letters and sounds has been adopted successfully.

Leadership and management are good and a good start has been made at self-evaluation. This has established that there is a need for more rigorous recording of assessments of children's gains in skills and knowledge to enable staff to focus on the next steps in learning for these young children to improve their rates of progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing so that they are closer to those in reading.
- Improve systems of assessment and record these systematically so that teachers are fully aware how to take pupils forward in their learning.

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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?	1
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1

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	1
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**

8 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Malvern Wells Church of England Primary School, Malvern, WR14 4HF

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome that you gave to Miss Robinson and me when we visited your school recently. We were extremely impressed with how polite and well mannered you were and we really enjoyed talking to you and hearing how much you enjoy your school. We are not surprised as we think it is a good school with some outstanding features.

These are some of the best things we found about your school.

- You behave exceptionally well and are developing into extremely responsible and caring young people. This is because all adults take exceptionally good care of you and set you an excellent example.
- You get off to a good start in Reception.
- You make good progress because you are being taught well and reach well above average standards in English, maths and science by the time you leave. We were also really impressed with the standards you reach in some other subjects like history, art, ICT and music.
- Your curriculum is planned well and you told us that you really enjoy the many visits you go on which make your learning more interesting.
- Although your school does not have a full-time headteacher at present, your education has not suffered at all because of the hard work of the acting headteacher, your teachers and particularly the governors, who have, as some of your parents said, 'made sure that the teachers can get on and teach you'.

These are the things that we have suggested should be improved.

- Your standards in writing are not as good as those in reading and we have suggested that your teachers make clearer plans to help you improve.
- Although teachers set you targets to help you improve your work, they do not always record clearly when you have reached these targets and what your next step in learning should be.

Thank you once again, and I know you will help to continue your school's improvement by working hard and doing your best.

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie

Lead inspector