

Tewin Cowper Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117457
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326616
Inspection date	2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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)	117
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	Mrs Rachel McCreith
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cannons Meadow Tewin Welwyn Hertfordshire AL6 0JU
Telephone number	01438 717378

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	2 July 2009
Inspection number	326616

Fax number

01438 718586

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	2 July 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress made by pupils throughout the school; the quality of teaching across the school; the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage children, and the effectiveness of leadership. They gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with staff and pupils, analysis of parents' views and scrutiny of school documentation and policies, as well as scrutiny of pupils' work. 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. When children are admitted to the Reception class, their attainment is similar to that normally found for children of that age. There is a below-average number of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and most of these have emotional or behavioural difficulties and/or moderate learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils in the school come from White British families and no pupils from other backgrounds are at an early stage of learning English. An above average number of pupils move in or out of the school at times other than at the usual admission or transfer points.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This small village school, with its welcoming classrooms and delightful grounds, is becoming increasingly popular. Some parents bring their children from as far as Welwyn, valuing its caring ethos in which every child is known and valued. It is a good school with some outstanding aspects to its work: pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

By the time they reach the end of Year 2, assessments for seven-year-olds indicate standards above the average nationally. All pupils reach at least the expected level for their age. Overall, pupils achieve well, but relatively few gain higher levels, especially in writing, compared with similar schools. The school is working to raise the levels of challenge for more able pupils so that they will make even better progress. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is well above average, with around half the pupils reaching above expected standards in English and mathematics and well over half in science. This represents good progress from the levels they attained at the age of seven, but the school is not complacent and is seeking to improve further. For example, standards in writing have risen this year, now that teachers give pupils specific and detailed guidance to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Where pupils fall behind, increasingly effective intervention programmes are put in place to support them. The provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties is excellent. Their needs are identified and special individualised programs that meet their needs particularly well are quickly put in place. They make very good progress as a result.

Attitudes to school are extremely positive. Pupils are keen to learn and work very enthusiastically in class. They show great interest and enjoyment in their lessons and their behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. There are very few instances of inappropriate behaviour or bullying. Pupils are very respectful of staff, visitors and each other. Many parents comment on their friendliness to each other: 'I am impressed by the way that the school fosters close, caring relationships between younger and older pupils.' It is partly because pupils are so happy at school that attendance figures are above the national average. The progress pupils make in English and mathematics, along with many opportunities to collaborate, ensures that they are prepared well for the future. They learn about economic well-being in effective and practical ways. For example, they developed entrepreneurial skills by organising and running a bring-and-buy plant sale at school to raise money for a local charity. The active and effective school council has made changes to the school, such as altering the dress code for pupils in cold weather. Members are elected by their classes. Older pupils who want posts of responsibility write letters of application. Pupils take a positive role in the local community, taking a leading role in the village May Day celebrations and helping with the Remembrance Service at the local church. The school has a vital place within the local community, so that according to parents and pupils, the school makes everyone feel a part of both their school and the wider community. They learn about the wider world community by studying other cultures, visiting places of worship of major religions and studying French.

The curriculum is outstanding, with a strong emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. There are many trips and visitors to enhance the curriculum and pupils benefit greatly from these, such as their visit to a special garden as part of a science project. The many projects and topics that the pupils cover bring coherence, richness and depth to their studies. There are excellent examples of work in history, geography and art as a result. However, a major reason for their good progress and their love of learning is the good teaching. Teachers have

high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They make lessons interesting by ensuring that pupils are not sitting listening for long periods, but are actively learning. Teachers use computer technology well to make teaching points graphically and present information in interesting, attention-grabbing ways. They explain things clearly and ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and how their success will be measured. Teachers plan lessons to provide different levels of work to meet the varied needs of their pupils. This is very successful with lower and middle ability pupils, but the work does not always challenge the most able sufficiently. Recent developments in the teaching of writing have ensured that they now have regular opportunities to write at length and to improve their written work. The pupils are told what they need to do to make their written work more accurate and interesting and help to set targets that they understand and can achieve. Writing standards are rising as a result. Overall, academic guidance is satisfactory because these techniques have not yet been extended to other subjects and so pupils are not always certain how they could improve their work.

Other aspects of support, care and guidance are outstanding and it is good overall. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Within the school's close family atmosphere, all children are known and cared for very well. Links with families are close and supportive, and links with external agencies give effective help to those pupils who need support.

Leadership and management are good and clearly focused on raising attainment. The headteacher has instigated developments that have helped to raise standards since the time of the last report, when the school's test results were in line with national averages. She is making class teachers more accountable for the progress that their pupils make. Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They have well-designed strategies for ensuring that all staff are accountable for pupils' progress. Improvement since the last inspection is good, as is the capacity to improve further. Governors contribute well and monitor all aspects of the school's performance. The school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children come into the Early Years Foundation Stage with overall skills broadly in line with those expected of children of this age. They have especially good social skills and attitudes to learning on entry to the school, but other areas of learning, such as creative development, are less advanced. The school is aware of the strengths and areas that need further development and works hard to ensure all children make good progress. As a result, at the end of the Reception Year most of the children have achieved or exceeded the expected goals in all six areas of learning and overall levels are slightly above the national average.

Children enjoy their time in the Reception class and flourish under the watchful eyes of the staff. There is a warm and caring ethos in the setting and children feel safe and secure amongst adults and peers. Their personal development is outstanding and the well-being of the children is most important to the staff, who encourage healthy eating such as fruit for snack time. Water is available for children to drink if they are thirsty. Behaviour is excellent and children relate well to others in their class and to the adults who take care of them.

Children have many opportunities to develop independence as they choose activities for themselves and play and explore together. They particularly enjoy spending time in the stimulating and attractive outside area. They also benefit from carefully planned sessions when

they work with adults who extend and direct their learning. However, these sessions do not always have enough pace and challenge for the children, especially those who are more able.

Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage setting is good and staff work to ensure that children experience a good transition into school from the many pre-school and nursery settings they come from. Staff foster strong links with parents and carers, and a programme of home visits takes place where the best introduction to school is discussed with parents. Parents and carers enjoy receiving their child's profile book which records in photographs how they have grown and achieved throughout their time in the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that those pupils who are capable of reaching high standards in their work are given sufficiently challenging work and targeted support.
- Ensure that pupils are helped to make the next steps in their learning by giving feedback that identifies clearly what they need to do to improve their 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?	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?	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?	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	2
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	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?	1
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

3 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Tewin Cowper Church of England (VA) Primary School, Tewin, AL6 0JU

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you. A special thank you to the children we met at lunchtime, who talked about what it is like to be a pupil at your school. You were very well behaved in assembly and your singing of 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' was lovely.

You said how much you like your school. We liked it too. You enjoy many of your lessons and have kind and helpful teachers. Your school gives you a good education and so you make good progress. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you well. By the end of Year 6, you have made good progress. You are better at reading, writing and mathematics than many children in other schools. You behave well. You help each other and do much to help people in the local community and beyond.

Your headteacher and all the staff care for you very well and are working hard to help you succeed. We have asked the teachers to make sure that they set you challenging work, so that you will make the best possible progress. We also want them to give you more guidance on how you can improve your work.

Once again thank you for a lovely day.

Yours faithfully

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector