

Witherley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120172
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327217
Inspection date	2 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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)	70
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	Keith Gardener
Headteacher	Alison Ward
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road Witherley Atherstone CV9 3NA
Telephone number	01827 712198

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	2 March 2009
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Fax number

01827 712198

Age group 4-11

Inspection date 2 March 2009

Inspection number 327217

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small rural primary school takes pupils from the local village as well as the nearby town of Atherstone. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside Year 1 and 2 pupils for part of each day. The headteacher has been in post for two years. During that time, considerable building work has taken place, and there have been several staffing changes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is moving forward under the clear direction of the relatively new headteacher. There is a strong commitment to improving provision further and a clear understanding of what remains to be done in order to ensure that progress is more even across all subjects. Satisfactory teaching means that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, differing needs are met well and children make good progress, even when working alongside older pupils. Standards at the end of Year 6 vary significantly from year to year due to the small size of each year group. In national tests in 2008, they were above average in science, slightly above average in English but below average in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in science because teachers give them many opportunities to carry out investigations and experiments. Progress in reading has also picked up over the last year as resources have been improved and there has been a successful focus on giving pupils greater support in developing key skills. In mathematics, the school is doing the right things to tackle a backlog of underachievement and progress is now satisfactory. However, there are still occasions when teachers do not pitch work at the right level for all pupils, slowing the pace of learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and they clearly enjoy school. They especially like the way that adults enrich the otherwise satisfactory curriculum by providing interesting activities outside lessons. The large number of clubs, especially in sport, has a good effect on pupils' learning and enjoyment of school. Pupils take responsibility very enthusiastically, and the school council gives them a good voice in the running of the school. Strong links with the local church contribute well to pupils' good spiritual development. Pupils take a good part in village activities, helping them to develop a good understanding of their own cultural backgrounds, although their understanding of the world beyond Witherley is less well developed and leaders have rightly identified this as a relative weakness.

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good, with pastoral support being especially strong. Strong links with outside agencies help to safeguard pupils' well-being. Parents are rightly pleased with the way that members of staff look after pupils. One parent summed up their views as follows: 'Witherley is a caring and safe environment.' Teachers have good relationships with pupils and they work hard to make learning fun. They are beginning to make sharper use of targets to help pupils understand how to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is taking the right steps to tackle the school's remaining weaknesses. Recent initiatives such as a focus on raising standards in reading and vastly improved accommodation are already having a positive effect, demonstrating that the school has the capacity to improve further. There are satisfactory systems for checking school effectiveness. Many subject leaders are new to their roles. They have made a good start to improving provision, but they are not yet sufficiently involved in all aspects of monitoring such as visiting lessons so that inconsistencies can be ironed out more quickly.

There is a very strong partnership between home and school. Parents like the school and make a significant contribution to its work by supporting their children's learning at home. Parents speak positively of recent developments, typically saying things like, 'There has been great progress made at the school in the last two years,' and 'The school has fresh and new ideas.'

Comments such as these accurately reflect the impact of the headteacher's work on this improving school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage varies considerably from year to year. Last year only half the children were working at the levels typically expected for this age group when they joined the school. These children made good progress from their starting points and standards were broadly average when they started in Year 1. Most children in the current Reception Year are working at or beyond the typically expected levels and are also making good progress. The teachers and nursery nurse work together well to provide good teaching in all areas of learning. Children start most lessons with other pupils in the mixed-age class, before working as a separate group in their new classroom. This is effective. Children's welfare is supported well, including in the before- and after-school clubs. This ensures that children's personal development and well-being are good. Children quickly learn how to share, develop good confidence and are keen to find things out for themselves. Members of staff plan exciting activities indoors and outside and ask probing questions to encourage good talking and listening. For example, children enjoyed discussing the collection of mini-beasts and counting pairs of socks for a washing line. Provision is well managed. Leaders are working well to give the children a wider range of choices now that recent building work has been completed. A new system for tracking the children's progress is enabling members of staff to identify and tackle gaps in learning even more swiftly

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers set work in lessons that challenges all pupils to do well, particularly in mathematics.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders in monitoring provision so that inconsistencies in provision can be ironed out more quickly.
- Ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of life in multicultural Britain and beyond.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards, although not significantly different from the national average overall, vary from year to year due to the small number of pupils in each year group. In Years 1 to 6, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils make the best progress in science, where standards were above average in national tests in 2008, because there is a lively and engaging approach to teaching scientific skills. Progress in reading is also good and has improved over the last year as outdated resources have been replaced. In writing and mathematics, progress is satisfactory, although a backlog of underachievement means that in some year groups, standards in mathematics are still not as high as they should be. The school sets realistic but challenging targets across the school but these are not always met, especially in mathematics. There are no significant differences between the progress of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their good attendance and positive comments. As one pupil said, 'I like it in this small school, you get to know everyone and get more attention.' Pupils like their teachers very much and greatly appreciate the many additional activities they provide such as clubs and visits. Pupils are keen to learn, listen well in most lessons and try hard. They are polite and cooperate well when working in small groups or pairs. As another pupil said, 'We're all friendly.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils form good relationships with others and contribute well towards the community. They carry out a wide range of tasks conscientiously. The school council members are pleased with the way that they help to improve the school. For example, they recently chose 'bright bins' for the playground. Pupils show good concern for the needs of others by raising funds for charity. They have a good understanding of their local culture, although their understanding of cultures other than their own is less well developed.

Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy. Road safety officers and 'star walkers' encourage other children to walk to school carefully and they know that they need to be careful when walking near the river by the school. Pupils take frequent exercise in 'Take-10' sessions and enjoy the good range of sports clubs on offer. Pupils are now making better progress in developing basic skills and are prepared adequately for the next stage of their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are good features to teaching across the school. Good-humoured teachers form good relationships with their pupils and use resources such as interactive whiteboards well to capture and hold their attention. Teachers give clear explanations to help pupils understand what to do and they work hard to provide a wide range of interesting activities. As one pupil said, 'I like the teachers, they tell us lots of things,' and another said, 'They teach us in different ways.' Teachers are particularly skilled in teaching science and their enthusiasm and good subject knowledge are passed on to the pupils successfully. However, they do not always ensure that tasks match the needs of all pupils in all lessons, especially in mathematics. In addition, teachers do not always expect pupils to work quickly enough. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently, and most provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve. Skilled teaching assistants support pupils well, especially when working closely with small groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is greatly enhanced by worthwhile visits, visitors and clubs. These contribute significantly to the pupils' good personal development. The curriculum is well planned for mixed-age classes, but it does not include enough opportunities for pupils to celebrate the cultural diversity of society. The science curriculum is a particular strength and pupils benefit from good opportunities for practical, investigative work. Teachers are working hard to improve

links between subjects to make all learning meaningful and to give pupils more opportunities to use and apply their writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum. The creative arts are promoted well and this is evident in the attractive displays around the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and well cared for in this friendly school. They know that members of staff will help them when necessary. Pupils report that there is only a little unkindness between pupils and that the teachers always 'sort it out'. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being and to support pupils who are finding life difficult. A well-run breakfast club gives pupils a good start to the day. Those who attend the after-school club are well cared for and supported.

Thorough assessment procedures provide teachers with good information about how well pupils are doing and are used to set pupils clear targets. However, teachers do not always bear these in mind well enough when planning work and not all pupils are aware of their targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given clear targets in individual education plans that help them to know how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has brought fresh ideas to the school and is moving the school forward. The monitoring of teaching by the headteacher is thorough and gives a clear picture of what is going well and what needs improving. There is a clear understanding that, despite recent improvements, progress in mathematics in particular is still not fast enough. Subject leaders are keen and enthusiastic and they are taking the right steps to improve provision, but have insufficient opportunities to visit lessons for themselves so that they can see first hand where there are inconsistencies and check that improvements are maintained.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Leaders respond well to the needs of their pupils and the local community. There are clear plans to strengthen pupils' awareness of life beyond Witherley, particularly by developing links with schools in other areas.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors play a good part in managing finances. They are doing the right things to strengthen their role in holding the school to account and are aware of the need to keep a close eye on the workload of the headteacher.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	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	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?	2

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?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Witherley Church of England Primary School, Atherstone, CV9 3NA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. We found that your school is providing a satisfactory education, which means that there are some good things and also some areas that could still be improved.

Some of the things we liked best about your school

- You get a good start in the Reception Year where you are taught well.
- Further up the school, you do particularly well in science because teachers teach this especially well.
- You behave very well, clearly enjoy school and take responsibility very sensibly. School councillors are conscientious and they are helping to improve the school.
- Adults are very kind and take good care of you. They are beginning to give you more information so that you know how to improve your work.
- You enjoy lots of interesting clubs, visits and visitors. The residential trip sounds as if it was great fun!
- The school successfully teaches you about the importance of staying safe and healthy.
- The headteacher and governors know what needs to be done to make sure that you learn even more quickly.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that teachers always pitch work at the right level for all of you, particularly in mathematics.
- Help the teachers who are in charge of subjects take a bigger part in finding out how well things are going in school.
- Help you to develop a better understanding of life beyond Witherley by learning more about people from different cultures and backgrounds.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard, especially in mathematics. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your work and watching you learn, and wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr Mike Capper

Lead inspector