

Aston Rowant Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123124
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327852
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Cathie Munt HMI

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)	61
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 Eleanor Church
Headteacher	Mrs Joy Farrell
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Lane Aston Rowant Watlington OX49 5SU
Telephone number	01844 351671

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Inspection number	327852

Fax number

01844 354030

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Inspection number	327852

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated standards and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the effectiveness of the subject managers in raising standards at the higher levels in writing and science, and the school's contribution to community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, by observing lessons, by scrutinising the school's records of pupils' achievement and other documentation, and by discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were other than justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This very small rural school serves a number of villages in a generally advantaged area. The number in each year group varies but none consists of more than a dozen pupils. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage and are taught in three mixed-age classes. The headteacher has a regular teaching commitment. The school is part of a learning network and partnership of schools which provides extended enrichment for pupils and additional training opportunities for staff. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than that generally found in primary schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. Several of these pupils have severe learning difficulties and a similar number have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school achieved Activemark in 2007 and Healthy School Status in Spring 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This excellent school is a thriving community where pupils feel very safe and valued. It goes from strength to strength under the accomplished leadership of the headteacher. Her passion for developing well-rounded, confident, articulate pupils is shared by staff and governors and is supported wholeheartedly by parents. Pupils throughout the school make excellent progress in all their work and meet the challenging targets set for them. With extremely small numbers of pupils in some year groups, national test results can be affected considerably by one pupil missing a grade by a single point. However, exceptional teamwork, excellent teaching and very effective monitoring of pupils' work ensures that high standards are maintained across the school. Pupils develop excellent teamworking skills. Speaking and listening skills, which are outstanding in all year groups, support pupils well in their learning. Observation of pupils' work and data from regular assessments confirm that progress made in science and writing has improved since the last inspection. Science work is well above average and is in line with that of English and mathematics. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress because teaching and pastoral support are individualised so effectively.

Subject leaders have a very clear idea of the school's strengths and of the areas they wish to develop. The implementation of a commercial computer program to capture data is the next logical step in ensuring that assessment continues to drive up standards. The manual collation of assessment data serves the school well enough but a common electronic system will enable staff to share data more easily with relevant partners. Carefully chosen professional development activities revitalise staff and keep them abreast of latest trends. Staff lead on many interesting local, county and national projects and the school promotes excellent practice among other schools in the local partnership. This outstanding and hard-working team provides an excellent model for overcoming the limitations faced by small schools.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual development is evident in their responses to the wonders of nature, for example, when they talked about seeing lambs born on the neighbouring farm. They develop an admirable appreciation of spiritual values through excellent links with the local church. Exceptional moral and social development is seen in the tremendous care they show for one another and in their ability to work and play harmoniously with children older and younger than themselves. Pupils exhibit an excellent understanding of, and appreciation for, their own and other cultures and traditions. The promotion of community cohesion is part of the warp and weft of the school. Through varied partnership activities with local and diocesan schools, residential visits and links with a school in India, the children have an excellent understanding of how other communities operate. 'Everyone can feel included here,' said one child. They feel secure because effective steps are taken to provide a safe environment. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through the school council and all undertake junior citizenship training. They make a major contribution to the local community through taking part in village activities such as the annual fair and participating in sporting events with schools in the local partnership. The school was awarded the Activemark in recognition of the high quality of physical education provision. Pupils' high levels of literacy, oracy and numeracy, together with very good computer skills, prepare them extremely well for their future. The lively buzz of learning that was seen in all classes indicates that pupils enjoy their lessons enormously. Their attendance, punctuality and behaviour are exemplary. They are well aware of safety issues and proud that their school has a Healthy School Award.

Outstanding teaching, seen in all key stages, is extremely well adapted to the range of ages and abilities in each class. Teaching assistants, working closely with the teachers, play an important part in the children's education. Relevant and interesting lessons enthuse the pupils, ensuring that they make excellent progress. Older pupils experimented excitedly with planting seeds and speculated thoughtfully about what factors might affect growth. Younger pupils, using an appropriate computer program, hypothesised well about mathematical shapes and quantities. A benefit of having small numbers in each year group is the experience that teachers have gained in adapting the curriculum flexibly to suit the particular needs of groups and individuals. Consequently, the rich curriculum meets pupils' needs extremely well, helps them to develop a large knowledge base and generates excitement about learning. 'Although Aston Rowant is a small school,' wrote a parent, 'they really put a lot of effort into their lessons, activities, school trips and after-school clubs. As a result, my daughter looks forward to going in every day.' Subjects include French, dance and cycle training. Partnership arrangements provide regular opportunities to take part in sport, arts and musical events. Excellent use is made of the school's unique setting, for example, examining the hedgerows for native British plants on the way to school and monitoring the spread of wild flowers on the school field. Pupils are cared for and guided extremely well because of the diligence and commitment of all staff. They know how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do next to improve. Attractive and informative displays help to stimulate pupils' interest, and encourage them to take pride in their own and others' work. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent because of the support they receive from knowledgeable and caring staff. The excellent leadership and management of subjects are evident in the high standard of work across the curriculum. Beautifully executed science work and extremely well-presented independent projects were seen.

Governors, some of whom are relatively new to the role, promote and support the school effectively. For example, due to the impact of a small but significant drop in numbers, they have agreed a managed deficit budget with the local authority for next year in the expectation that numbers will rise significantly in September. Together with the tireless teaching and support staff, they have ensured that assessment, monitoring and marking of work, and the development of writing and science, have improved since the last inspection and are of the highest standard. This illustrates the school's undoubted capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children receive an excellent start to their education. 'We definitely chose the best,' wrote one parent, a sentiment echoed by many. The mixed-age class is led and managed extremely well. Caring, cooperative and knowledgeable adults effectively support the children's physical development and their social and academic skills. They know the children exceptionally well and all decisions are made with their welfare at heart. Parents are genuinely welcomed as partners in their children's education and many regularly start the school day working alongside their child. Superb planning and extremely effective teaching ensure that children settle in quickly and happily, experience variety and challenge, and develop good learning habits that include independent enquiry and perseverance. Many parents commented positively on how effectively the school meets the needs of different age groups and those with additional learning needs. Younger children learn effortlessly from older pupils and the older pupils benefit from having opportunities to share their skills and knowledge. The current geography topic is a prime example of extremely successful curriculum planning that fully matches the wide range of social

and academic needs of 5- to 7-year-olds. Imaginative use is made of existing resources inside and outdoors. Children of all abilities and talents make excellent progress in their learning. They are confident and mature in their approach to work, whether in activities chosen by themselves or in working with adults, individually or in groups. Children play together in a very friendly manner, behave incredibly well and thoroughly enjoy coming to school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the electronic collection and collation of data on progress and attainment so that the school system is in line with partner schools.

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
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

04 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aston Rowant Church of England Primary School, Watlington, OX49 5SU

I am writing to let you know what we found out about your school when we inspected it recently. Thank you for sharing your thoughts so clearly and politely with us. Here are some of the most important points.

- We agree with your parents that your headteacher and the entire staff work very hard and make Aston Rowant an excellent place to learn.
- We enjoyed seeing the excellent teaching in every class and we have praised the way your teachers make the most of your lovely school site.
- You make excellent progress in your learning because of such very good teaching and because you come to school regularly and work hard in class. Keep this up!
- Many things are really outstanding. These include the way the staff care for you and treat everyone equally, the exciting subjects and clubs, and the trips and visits you make.
- All of these help you to become knowledgeable and capable young people who are very pleasant, helpful and sensible. You are a great credit to your parents and to your school but most of all to yourselves.
- We were glad to hear that you feel safe in school and that you know how to keep safe outside. I am sure that the cyclists will do very well in the road safety tests that they will be taking soon.
- You get along extremely well with each other in and out of school and it was lovely to see you helping each other at break and in your lessons.
- You enjoy taking part in community events and you also do a lot for people who are not as fortunate as yourselves. You have raised a lot for different charities and we heard how you are helping the school in India. Well done!
- The teachers are planning to use a new computer program to record your results. This will help them when they work with teachers from other schools. We agree that this is a good idea and we think that it will help to make record keeping a bit easier.

Yours faithfully

Cathie Munt

Her Majesty's Inspector