

# Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School (VA)

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134164
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	328845
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Watts

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	443
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Jean Potter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Hamilton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Singleton Drive Grange Farm Milton Keynes MK8 0PZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 867356

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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**Fax number**

01908 867165

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Christ the Sower Ecumenical is much larger than average primary school. About two thirds of the pupils come from a White British background. The remainder come from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds with Black African and Indian being the next largest groups. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. These difficulties lie mainly in the areas of moderate learning, speech, language and communication. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Nursery and Reception classes. The school opened in September 2004 with 55 pupils and has rapidly grown in numbers. The proportion of pupils who join the school other than at the normal starting points has been high in the past. This situation is stabilising now that the school has almost reached its full capacity. During the past year, there have been considerable changes to the teaching staff and to key leaders.

## 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 provides a satisfactory education. There are good features to its work. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start because of the good provision. Effective pastoral care and a positive school atmosphere lead to good personal development and well-being for pupils. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2 achieve satisfactorily from their starting points.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Care and pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted well. With her staff, the headteacher has created a positive climate in which pupils can learn. The challenges of a growing school with new pupils joining at different times have been managed effectively. However, the high turnover of staff has had a negative impact on consistency in practice and on the school's development. Most key leaders and managers are new and are developing in their role. They are not yet fully effective in monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are strengths of the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen participation in activities and their above-average attendance. They are friendly and polite and relate well to others. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. However, there are a few pupils with challenging behaviour. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles extremely well and know how to keep themselves safe. They thrive on the additional responsibilities given, such as serving on the school council and raising funds for charities.

By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. The school is taking positive steps to improve writing. Standards by the end of Year 6 are below average. Pupils who join the school in Years 3 to 6 tend to attain less well than their peers who have been in the school longer. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good practice. When teaching is good, pupils are challenged well, tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and learning maintains a brisk pace. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school. In some lessons, teachers' expectations, pace and the levels of challenge are not high enough and learning slows. The curriculum is satisfactory.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. While most are happy with the care and education provided for their children, a significant minority who responded to the parents' questionnaire expressed concerns. Parents are pleased with the care provided, the approachability of staff, the Early Years Foundation Stage provision and the range of additional activities offered. However, concerns were expressed about their children's progress, behaviour, and the leadership and management. Evidence from the inspection confirms that pupils could make better progress, particularly the more able. Most pupils are well behaved but there are a few with challenging behaviour. The leadership team accept the need to establish a more effective partnership with some parents in order to address their concerns.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage has made good improvements since the last inspection and parents appreciate the good provision. More settled staffing in this phase of the school has contributed to the improvements. Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills below

the levels expected for their age. A significant proportion of children arrive with limited communication, language and social skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there is good teamwork among teachers and assistants. These factors contribute to the good quality provision and positive outcomes for children. Good teaching, outstanding attention to welfare and an interesting range of learning activities enable children to make good progress. The warm and positive relationships between adults and children lead to good progress in children's personal development. Teachers and assistants provide an effective blend of adult-led activities and allowing children to explore and learn independently. Children feel safe and secure and thoroughly enjoy their learning. For example, during the inspection, the children dressed up as famous story characters. They had great fun as the well-planned day developed their speaking and listening, reading and social skills very well. Assessments of children's performance are good overall but staff are aware of the need to carry out longer observations to fully assess children's learning and future needs. The outdoor area with its good range of apparatus and equipment promotes creative and physical development well. By the end of Reception, children attain broadly average standards in most areas of learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards in writing by the end of Year 2, and in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6, in particular by improving the attainment of pupils new to the school in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that the good teaching is more widely spread, that all tasks challenge pupils at the right level and learning maintains a quick pace.
- Extend the role of new leaders and managers so they are fully effective in monitoring and improving performance.
- Take positive steps to build a stronger partnership with some parents and tackle their concerns.

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. National assessments indicate that standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. The school is taking appropriate steps to raise achievement and standards in writing. Across the school, writing opportunities are being extended. However, there is scope to increase the chance for pupils to apply and develop writing skills in other subjects. Pupils' work and provisional 2008 national test results indicate standards by the end of Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science. The school's assessment and tracking show that pupils who have been with the school for a longer time tend to make more progress and reach higher standards than those who have been with the school a short while. However, the headteacher and senior staff are aware that increasing the proportion of good teaching is the key to raising achievement and standards further. Pupils who need additional support with their learning make satisfactory progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They possess a good knowledge and understanding of different religions. Pupils are well behaved in class and around the school. The pupils commented, 'Our behaviour is not excellent because a few can let us down'. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are good. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and demonstrate an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. They make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and have contributed to improvements to the playground facilities. Pupils take an active part in conserving and protecting the environment. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are involved in a range of composting and recycling projects. Pupils support those who are less well off than themselves by raising funds for national and global charities. Pupils are adequately prepared for the future. Their personal and social skills are well developed and they make sound progress in literacy and numeracy.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, as shown by its impact on pupils' progress. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because the purpose of a lesson is effectively shared at the start. This is an improved area since the last inspection. Most teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. Pupils respond positively to teachers' clear and informative explanations and instructions. Questioning is used well by teachers to check pupils' understanding of new learning. When assessment information is used effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. In these lessons, pupils are challenged well and they make good gains in their learning. However, activities and tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the more able. Not all lessons proceed at a good pace and, on occasions, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do could be higher. The presentation of pupils' work varies in quality. Teaching assistants are appropriately deployed and make a sound contribution to pupils' learning. There are some good examples of marking where praise and encouragement provided for good work and there are helpful comments to guide improvement. This good practice is not consistent in all classes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development but does not promote consistently good progress. Provision for English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. The new curriculum leader is aware of the need to build and plan key skills into the curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes are being increased. However, there is not a clear or consistently implemented policy for handwriting, to support the school's drive on improving writing. There are some good examples of investigative work in mathematics and science but these are not consistent in all years. Pupils are using information and communication technology satisfactorily to support their learning. A wide range of additional activities is offered including clubs and visits. Popular clubs include pottery,

basketball, drama, computers and football. A successful residential visit to the Isle of Wight for Years 5 and 6 develops pupils' geographical knowledge and skills as well as their personal skills. Health and safety education is promoted very effectively throughout the curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's positive and welcoming atmosphere underpins pupils' good personal development. Pastoral care is a strong feature of the school and there are good partnerships with outside agencies. There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are protected, safe and secure. As a result, pupils feel well cared for and know that there is always an adult they can turn to if they are upset or have a problem. The learning mentor initiative provides good support for pupils who need it. The monitoring and promotion of attendance are good. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has developed clear systems to assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils are set specific learning targets in literacy and numeracy so most know what they need to do to improve. Individual target setting is developing well in science especially in Year 6. However, assessment and individual target setting are not well established enough to lead to consistently good progress for pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leaders and managers promote good care and good personal development and well-being for pupils. Their impact on pupils' achievement, teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory. Senior staff are aware of the need to focus on improving teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement from satisfactory to good and better.

The deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and leaders of English, mathematics and science are all new to their posts. Most key leaders are developing in their roles and are not yet fully effective in monitoring performance and producing sharply focused actions plans to improve provision and raise achievement and standards.

School self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school has a sound view of its performance but it does not always link the impact of provision to the outcomes for pupils. As a result, the school believes that aspects such as curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management are better than they are. Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified but improvement planning is overlong and improving the consistency of teaching is not given sufficient prominence.

Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. There are clear strengths in this area. The school has good partnerships with the church and external agencies. The before and after school club is popular with parents and pupils. It is much appreciated by working parents. Different cultures and religions are promoted well through the curriculum. However, the school does not have a clear understanding of the views and needs of all of its parents.

The governors have a sound understanding of the school's performance and provide considerable support. Governors know that pupils are doing well in their personal development and are aware that improvements are needed with respect to pupils' academic development. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.



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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?	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?	3
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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School (VA), Milton Keynes, MK8 0PZ

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we have found. Yours is a satisfactory school. It has some good features.

These are the main strengths of the school.

- You really enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start.
- The school is a welcoming and pleasant place to be in.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- The staff take good care of you and give you good support.
- The clubs and visits organised by the school are good.

There are four things the school can work on to make improvements.

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 could make more progress in writing. In Years 3 to 6 many of you could make more progress in English, mathematics and science and reach higher standards.
- In some lessons, teachers could challenge you more and ensure that learning moves on at a quick pace.
- Some senior leaders need more development and training to improve their areas of responsibility.
- The school should build a stronger partnership with some parents and take steps to sort out their concerns.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard, particularly at science. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector