

Christopher Reeves Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109622
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	337337
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Hodgkiss
Headteacher	Mrs Sue McNally
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
School address	Hinwick Road Podington Wellingborough
Telephone number	01933 353531
Fax number	01933 313615
Email address	creeves@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2009
Inspection number	337337

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and local authority representatives. They observed the school's work including a sample of pupils' books, teachers' planning documents, tracking and assessment data and analysed questionnaires from 26 parents, 24 pupils and seven staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which lesson observations and assessments of pupils' work show improved progress in Key Stage 1
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage and typical attainment on entry
- the impact of strategies to improve mathematics
- the opportunities for pupils to understand what life is like in different communities around the country and the world.

Information about the school

This small school draws pupils from the village of Podington and the surrounding area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Children's skills on entry to the school vary from year to year because cohorts are small but are typically at average levels. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average although the school has a high proportion of pupils with a statement of complex needs. The school has achieved the ActiveMark and the Healthy Schools' Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Christopher Reeves Lower is a good school. It has improved since the last inspection and continues to do so under the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, who provides a clear sense of direction, clearly linked to school improvement. Effective leadership of the senior leadership team combined with a more stable staffing situation has ensured that teaching and learning have improved and clear priorities have been set for further improvement. The school is a warm Christian community with an excellent family atmosphere that welcomes every pupil. Parents are extremely supportive of the school. One parent, typical of many, commented: 'I always have a happy child at the beginning and end of every school day!'

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. Planning, provision and resourcing for both the indoor and outdoor curriculum is good and as a result, children have a good range of opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. Throughout the school all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress during their time in school. Overall attainment in the latest National Curriculum assessments in Year 2 was above the national average although standards in mathematics were average. Attainment in Year 4 was above expectations for pupils' age in English and broadly in line with expectations in mathematics, an improvement on the previous year. Arrangements for the evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning are good and the quality of teaching is good as a result. Pupils' personal development is good overall. Parents say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically, as is reflected in their very good levels of attendance. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and of the need for healthy lifestyles. As a result of the school's Values Education programme, a strong moral code is implicit in the school's ethos and this is reflected in pupils' exemplary behaviour. This in turn has a very positive effect on the good progress pupils make in lessons. They work hard and conscientiously, both independently and co-operatively, without the need for constant adult intervention. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a good variety of exciting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of before and after-school activities and clubs, including physical activities. Pastoral care of pupils is good. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and data analysed rigorously to ensure any pupil falling behind is identified quickly and support is provided. The school has good links with groups and schools in the local area but realises it needs to do more to develop links further afield, in the country and overseas. Staff have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next and has a good capacity to maintain and sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work to raise standards in mathematics to the good level of attainment in reading and writing by providing additional challenge for more able pupils.
 - Improve community cohesion by strengthening efforts to develop better links with schools and organisations nationally and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From broadly average levels of attainment on entry, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Results in National Curriculum assessments in Year 2 and school assessment and tracking data show that pupils, across the range of abilities, are achieving well. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading and writing at both Year 2 and by Year 4, when they leave the school. However, progress in mathematics, whilst satisfactory, is not as strong as in English. The school has devised strategies to narrow this gap and indications from lesson observations and an analysis of pupils' work are that these are beginning to have a positive effect on the progress of pupils. Parents particularly like the school's 'Values Education' curriculum, one writing: 'It is crucial in helping to reinforce how we expect our daughter to behave at home and give her a strong sense of what's right and wrong.' Pupils' exemplary behaviour is an outstanding factor in the good progress they make in lessons and creates a very positive school ethos. Pupils work well together and individually without the need for constant reminders and there is no evidence of disruptive behaviour. They know and understand the important factors which affect their health and respond well to the school's health promotion strategies which have earned the school the Healthy Schools' Award. Pupils value their school community and willingly take on responsibilities. They participate constructively in school life, suggesting and taking actions to help improve the school. They are well-equipped for the future with their well-developed academic and social skills. Pupils respect each others' needs and interests and are curious about the world around them, embracing new experiences enthusiastically.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and there are some outstanding role models. Teachers ensure classroom routines are made clear and regularly reinforced so that learning takes place in a well-structured environment and all pupils can contribute to lessons. Learning intentions are made clear at the beginning of each lesson and, as a result, pupils know precisely what they are expected to do. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well supported by effective and skilled teaching assistants, who are fully involved in lessons and ensure that pupils receive extra help as they need it. In most cases, teachers plan effectively to provide a range of work well matched to the different ages and abilities in each mixed-age class. However, more able pupils are not always suitably challenged in mathematics lessons. Pupils receive good verbal feedback on how well they are doing but marking does not always give them any indication of what they could do to improve. The good whole school assessment and tracking procedures ensure rapid intervention and appropriate support where necessary. However, the school realises that a computerised tracking system would be more 'user-friendly' to all staff and make it easier for senior management and, importantly, class teachers to better track the progress of individuals and small groups within the school. The curriculum provides well-organised and effective opportunities for learning and a broad range of experiences. A good range of well-attended extra-curricular opportunities, before, during and after school, contribute well to pupils' well-being and development. The school's well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils contribute significantly to their good development and support their learning effectively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with the able support of the senior teacher, provides strong leadership, firmly focused on securing improvement. Good use is made of a range of rigorous monitoring activities. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has secured clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. Staff are strongly motivated and have a clear sense of direction including a strong commitment to improving provision even further. Teamwork is promoted strongly and is reflected in the school's well-focused improvement plan. The governors have a good overview of the school's work and future priorities and fulfil their roles effectively. The school has a positive relationship with parents and regularly asks for their views and acts on the responses. This effective liaison with parents and carers and the school's good links with external partners contribute well to improvements in pupils' achievement, well-being and development. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and where there are minor variations in achievement, for example, between boys and girls, the school is pro-active in modifying the curriculum to narrow the gap. The school has good safeguarding procedures which reflect recommended good practice across all areas of its work and are in line with government requirements. The school identifies dangers, fosters a realistic understanding of risk and helps pupils to keep themselves safe. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Although it has very strong and developing links with local schools and organisations, it realises there is a need to develop further the wider national and global dimensions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the youngest children is good. Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They clearly enjoy school and, after being there part-time for only a few weeks, they have settled into the routines well and play happily together and individually. They undertake a variety of whole class and group activities and, in most cases, co-operate well when working with others. They delight in learning and seeing new things. There are good relationships with parents and carers, initially through home-visits and, once children start school, through daily contact at the start and end of each day. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are effective. Consequently, children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly, are well-supported and are integrated well into all activities. Provision for the outdoor curriculum is good - the Early Years Foundation Stage classroom has free access to a secure outdoor area with a range of free-choice and adult-led activities. This allows children to explore things with purpose and challenge and encourages the development of their independent learning skills. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Adults have a good knowledge of the learning development and welfare requirements and guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are good systems for the long-term assessment and tracking of children's progress. Staff monitor and record children's progress on a day to day basis effectively and observations and achievements are recorded in individual 'Pupil Profiles'.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of questionnaires returned were overwhelmingly positive about the

school. In all but two of the returns all responses were totally positive. One parent felt that the school wasn't preparing his/her child well for the future and both parents felt that the school wasn't dealing appropriately with unacceptable behaviour. The inspectors investigated both these matters and could find no evidence to substantiate these criticisms.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Christopher Reeves Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	77	6	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	62	9	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	35	17	65	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	42	15	58	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	69	10	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	62	10	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	31	14	54	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	46	14	54	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	27	14	54	2	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	42	14	54	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	50	13	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	50	13	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christopher Reeves CE VA Lower School, Podington, NN29 7HU

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleague and I very much enjoyed our visit.

Christopher Reeves is a good and rapidly improving school and I'm pleased to say that the outstanding feature of your school is your excellent behaviour! You all work hard and try to succeed in all that you do and, as a result, make good progress. Your headteacher and staff are leading the school well. They make sure you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe, and you are good at doing this. They care for you well and give you good support so that you can enjoy your lessons. You told us your teachers are fair and sort things out quickly. You said that you really like your school and there are lots of things for you to do and enjoy. We agree with you.

We have asked your school to do two things that will make it even better:

Help you to do as well in mathematics as you do in reading and writing

Develop more links with schools and communities outside the local area

You too can contribute to the further improvement of your school by continuing to attend with the same positive attitudes and willingness that you show at the moment.

Yours faithfully

Clive Lewis

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.