

# Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109958
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337408
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Eadie

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Neil Ralph
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Plackett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Cold Ash Hill Cold Ash Thatcham RG18 9PT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at various documentation, including: the school development plan; papers relating to safeguarding policies and procedures; school tracking data to show the progress pupils are making; governors' papers; Ofsted pupils' and staff questionnaires and 105 parents' questionnaires.

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

- Whether pupils are making good progress, as suggested in the school's evaluation, or satisfactory, as suggested by data.
- Whether pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 has improved and is now good.
- The reasons why standards in mathematics are lower than those in other subjects.
- Whether the provision for lower-attaining pupils is enabling them to make sufficient progress.

## Information about the school

A very large majority of pupils at this smaller than average-sized primary school are White British. Others represent a range of different ethnicities. Very few speak languages other than English at home. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average, though most of these have quite significant behavioural or educational needs and a greater than average proportion has statements of special needs. The school makes provision for Early Years Foundation Stage children in a Reception class, where all children now start in September.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school where pupils make good progress and enjoy their school life. A key reason for their enjoyment is the extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities, recognised by the award of first prize for 'learning out of school' from the education section of the Royal County of Berkshire Show. Almost all pupils take part in one or more of these activities, which range from fencing through an exceptional range of sporting and cultural clubs to the Egypt club. Pupils' enjoyment of school is exemplified by the consistently high attendance figures. Pupils get on extremely well together and behave well. Older pupils are very good at caring for and playing with younger ones and this stems from the care and concern shown to pupils from all adults.

Children join the school in the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge significantly below those expected for their age. They make good progress through the school and leave having reached average standards overall. These standards have improved in writing as this has been a recent focus for the school, and pupils are now working at significantly above-average levels in English. The school has recognised that there is now work to be done to raise standards in mathematics. The main reason for the lower standards in this subject is that work is not always matched well to pupils' abilities.

There have been historical problems with pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2, but these have been resolved and pupils in these two classes are now making good progress. Data also appear to indicate that lower-attaining pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. However, evidence from the inspection shows that they are supported well and are making the same good progress as their classmates. Part of the reason for this mismatch between what data suggest and the progress being made is that the school, while making good provision for them, does not formally classify some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils learn well in lessons and part of the reason for this is that the school has listened to their views on what they enjoy in lessons and has adapted the curriculum accordingly. A good start has been made at helping pupils to see their next steps in learning in writing, but these are not yet being used consistently and, in their questionnaires, a number of pupils said that they do not know how well they are doing. There are few such targets in mathematics.

The headteacher and staff have worked hard to raise standards in writing and this has been successful as they have almost caught up with those in reading. One of the strengths of the leadership of the school is the analysis of data, which led to the focus on writing. Self-evaluation is accurate and governors have begun to play a fuller role in

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this. However, processes of self-evaluation have not been widened out to staff at all levels. Pupils almost always meet the challenging targets set for them, although in mathematics the numbers, while still being above average, are not so high. All of this indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers have a clear knowledge of pupils' previous learning so that they can take them on progressively
  - ensuring that tasks set in lessons are closely matched to the range of abilities in each class
  - ensuring that time is used to best effect so that pupils, particularly the more able, do not sit listening when they have already understood.
- Involve pupils more fully in the process of evaluating the success of their learning by:
  - ensuring that they know what skills and knowledge they have gained
  - setting them clear next steps in learning
  - ensuring that teachers then mark to these next steps
  - enabling pupils to monitor their progress in relation to these next steps
  - involving parents in this process.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

On their questionnaires, almost all pupils said they enjoy school and those spoken to enjoyed lessons. One of the reasons given was that their teacher is 'excitable', meaning lively! Year 6 pupils were fully involved in researching major rivers of the world on the internet as their teacher made good use of technology. A good example of how teachers use questioning well to extend pupils' learning was observed in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, when the teacher was not satisfied with just the answer, but asked, 'How do you know?' This encouraged pupils to verbalise their thinking and embed their understanding. However, there are times when learning slows as teachers have pupils sitting on the carpet for too long. This was evident in a lesson for younger pupils, when they showed their relief at getting up by becoming 'bubbly' and time was wasted while the teacher re-established order. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates due to the support they receive. Although there have been some differences between the performance of boys and girls in the past, these have now been addressed and their performance is similar.

Pupils' personal skills are developing well. They are courteous, considerate and thoughtful, with a good sense of their place in society and their responsibilities towards it. All that is needed to turn many of these outcomes to outstanding is for pupils to take more initiative and develop more independent skills. Pupils have a good awareness of

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their local culture and have some good knowledge of global issues, but are not so well aware of the diversity of the United Kingdom community.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

The curriculum has been redesigned to make it more interesting and relevant to pupils. Links between subjects are being developed, but as yet pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. There are good links with local schools, which enhance opportunities for pupils. For example, expertise from a secondary school is used well to provide challenge for more-able pupils. Teachers make good use of technology, such as interactive whiteboards and computers, to raise levels of pupils' interest and engagement.

There are good systems of assessment to keep a check on the progress pupils are making in the long term. These are used well to identify any pupils in danger of falling behind and effective programmes of support are put in place to help them catch up. However, teachers do not always know exactly what skills and knowledge are being mastered in the short term, which means that pupils are sometimes given work that is

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

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too easy or that is too difficult.

Systems of care are very good, particularly for potentially vulnerable pupils. Outside expertise is used regularly to ensure that provision for these pupils is promoting their achievement and well-being.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

There is a clear sense of common purpose and drive about all leaders and governors. This is shared well with staff, all of whom said on their questionnaires that they are aware of what the school is trying to achieve. Development planning is clear, with measurable success criteria set. Governance has developed well recently and governors have produced a good three-year strategic plan for the school. The recently formed governors' development committee has already done good work in completing sections of the school's self-evaluation form.

At the time of the inspection all safeguarding procedures were secure and met requirements. Risk assessments are particularly thorough. This all arises from the school's desire to be fully inclusive so that all pupils, whatever their needs, can play a full part in all aspects of school life. This they do well, although some more-able pupils are not always challenged effectively. The promotion of community cohesion is effective, with the school playing a significant role in the local community and pupils developing good knowledge of the global community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Although children make good progress in the Reception class, they reach standards that are a little below average by the time they start in Year 1 due to their low starting points. Children make particularly good progress in their development of phonics and early writing skills, due to the focus that is put on these important areas of learning. This is indicative of good leadership which has resulted in good knowledge and analysis of these young children's needs.

Children are learning well because of the good range of learning opportunities planned for them. There is a good balance of activities led by an adult and those which children choose for themselves. For instance, in a whole-class activity where the children were looking at shapes, they talked to one another sensibly about the properties of the shapes they had. When children were allowed to choose their own activities, an adult took full advantage of the windy conditions by taking streamers outside and great fun was had with children seeing the effect of the wind. However, there are occasions when opportunities are missed to develop children's language, with adults asking questions that require only a one-word answer or not asking the follow-up question to extend learning. Independence is encouraged. For example, children self-register when they arrive in the mornings.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 majority of parents returned the questionnaire sent out as part of the inspection. Although a very large majority of parents are happy with the school, some significant concerns were expressed. For instance, several parents raised concerns about bullying. Inspectors spoke to pupils of a range of ages, both formally and informally, and raised



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this issue. Some of these pupils said that incidents do occur, but 'they are not serious' and that when they do happen they are dealt with well by staff. Some other parents are concerned that not all staff or volunteers have been adequately vetted. Inspectors carried out a thorough analysis of the school's checking procedures and found them all to be in good order and covering all employees and volunteers. A few parents consider that more-able children are not always challenged effectively. Inspectors agree and have suggested to the school that this should be improved.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary 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 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	58	38	36	6	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	51	39	37	9	9	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	23	60	57	15	14	4	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	29	59	56	9	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	47	45	50	48	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	31	54	51	11	10	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	38	57	54	8	8	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)	48	46	46	44	8	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	33	53	50	13	12	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	22	60	57	11	10	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	28	48	46	13	12	6	6
The school is led and managed effectively	23	22	59	56	12	11	6	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	42	48	46	10	10	1	1

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



20 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School, Thatcham, RG18 9PT

Thank you so much for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to many of you and were particularly impressed with how well you all get on with each other. We were especially pleased to see how regularly you attend school. You told us that you really enjoy school and we are not surprised as it is a good school. It was also clear, from the presentation in assembly of the cup from the Newbury Show, that most of you take part in a very wide range of other activities apart from lessons.

You are learning well and making good progress as you are being taught well. You are not doing so well in mathematics, but your school has been concentrating on improving your writing. This has been very successful and you are now doing really well in writing. Your headteacher and teachers have good plans to move on to improving your mathematics. All adults look after you very well and you also look after each other well. We were really impressed with how a lot of the older ones help the younger children, particularly at playtime. We were glad to see that you have been asked what you like and think could be better in your learning and that the school has taken note and improved the enjoyment of lessons in some subjects as a result.

There are just two things that we have asked your school to improve.

- Help you to do better in maths by making sure that you always have work that is at the right level for you, especially for those of you who find work easy.
- Several of you on your questionnaires told us that you do not always know how to improve your work and we think this is important. We have suggested that teachers set the sort of targets that you have in writing in some other subjects, particularly mathematics, and make sure that these are used in the same way by all teachers. This will help you to keep your own check on how well you are doing.

We are sure that you will help by continuing to work hard. Best wishes and every success.

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie

Lead inspector

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