

Little Marlow Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110466
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337505
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Emmett
Headteacher	Anne Harding
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2007
School address	School Lane Little Marlow Marlow SL7 3SA
Telephone number	01628 473316
Fax number	01628 473316
Email address	office@littlemarlow.bucks.sch.uk

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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

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors saw four teachers at work in nine lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding and other documents. Questionnaires from 26 parents and carers and six members of staff were scrutinised.

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

- How well teaching and the curriculum are meeting the needs of boys, especially in writing.
- The impact of marking and target setting.
- The impact of all leaders, including the governors, on monitoring teaching and improving provision and progress.
- How well pupils are supported in learning about other cultures.
- How care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' confidence and well-being.

Information about the school

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The school has a below average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nearly all of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The school has received several awards including the Activemark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The enthusiastic and lively pupils receive a satisfactory education at this happy school. They appreciate the welcoming family atmosphere and the good quality care they receive. Pupils were adamant that they 'like everything'. The school works well with parents to ensure that pupils settle into school life quickly. Children make a sound start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. However, they are not always given enough support when working at activities they have chosen for themselves. When this happens they do not learn as quickly as they could. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, enabling pupils to build steadily on what they have already learnt. Teachers plan interesting activities that help pupils to enjoy learning. However, they do not always expect enough of pupils during lessons, help them to work towards their individual targets or show them how they can do better next time when marking their work.

Pupils make satisfactory progress, leading to broadly average attainment by the end of Year 2. The school is working well to close the gap between reading and writing by increasing interesting opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum. This is especially successful in improving the motivation of the boys. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives. They demonstrate good personal skills, although they have limited knowledge of cultures and faiths other than their own. Sound procedures for self-evaluation enable senior leaders to understand what needs to be done next to improve the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning does not involve all leaders. Nevertheless, they have ensured a steady improvement in the rates of progress following a dip after the last inspection, demonstrating the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase support for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage when they are planning and carrying out their own ideas.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by making a closer link between target setting and marking, raising expectations of what pupils should do in each lesson and ensuring work matches differing needs closely.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures and faiths other than their own.
- Strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning by involving all leaders in reviewing provision and pupils' progress.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy school and make satisfactory progress. They find most activities to be interesting. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoyed following a story about a shark, and especially enjoyed shouting when the text was in capital letters. In Year 2, girls and boys enjoyed looking at shells with a magnifying glass before writing descriptive poems with phrases such as 'pale like strawberry ice-cream' and 'shimmering like the sea'. Pupils' learning slows when the tasks they have been given do not match their needs well enough. For example, in one numeracy lesson, some pupils were unsure about how to complete a problem with more than one step and did not finish their work.

Pupils feel safe at school and behave well, although they can become restless and inattentive when work is not challenging enough or when they are not reminded to work quickly. Pupils are keen to learn and attendance is broadly average due to genuine illnesses and a very few persistent absentees. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for tasks around the school. For example, the 'talk team' are proud when their ideas are used and older pupils enjoy being buddies to newcomers. Pupils cooperate with each other well when working in small groups or pairs and listen and respond sensibly in lessons.

Attainment is broadly average by the time pupils leave the school and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' sound literacy and numeracy skills and good personal development prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of education and later life.

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is demonstrated in the pupils' respectful behaviour and their delight in the world around them. They enjoy watching birds in the school grounds and understand that mothers do things for them 'because they love you'. Pupils have few opportunities for meeting pupils from differing ethnic backgrounds and consequently they have a limited knowledge of cultural diversity. Pupils thoroughly enjoy physical activities, especially at playtimes and in dance lessons. This has been recognised through the award of the Activemark. They know what foods are healthy and the contents of their lunch boxes often reflect this.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3

¹ 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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The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are welcoming and friendly and as a result pupils develop good relationships with them and are keen to please. Behaviour is managed well and pupils are right that they 'learn interesting stuff'. Teachers explain tasks clearly and use real objects to bring subjects to life. Assessment procedures are firmly in place and are used to set individual targets. However, this information is not used consistently when teachers are setting or marking work. As a consequence, pupils do not always make progress as quickly as they could. In addition, some tasks do not provide enough challenge. For example, one literacy activity took up too much time cutting out and sticking down text, rather than concentrating on learning the rhyming words. Teaching assistants provide helpful support when working with small groups of pupils in lessons, enabling them to make rapid progress.

Links between subjects are being developed well, particularly to involve boys more in writing. The curriculum includes suitable coverage of literacy and numeracy skills, but makes limited use of visits and clubs to enrich learning. Members of staff are very caring and support pupils well by praising them. Pupils tell us that they like receiving the 'very good' stamps for their best work and effort. The school does not ensure that all activities are frequently formally assessed for changing risks.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

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Self-evaluation is satisfactory and leaders are aware of the next steps needed for whole school development. They are satisfactory at embedding ambition and driving improvement. The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination, and the progress of all pupils is monitored closely so that dips in progress can be tackled. Monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory because it is mainly carried out by the headteacher. As a consequence, other leaders have insufficient opportunities to evaluate teaching and learning in the subjects they manage to help move teaching forward more swiftly.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and are knowledgeable about the school. They are developing their roles in taking the initiative in challenging the school over its actions. At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding arrangements were found to be satisfactory because there were some minor administrative omissions. These do not impact on the well-being of the pupils. Leaders have good relationships with parents and carers, and work suitably well with external agencies to support pupils, including those who are vulnerable. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Pupils learn about local culture well by taking part in events such as 'Praise in the Park', but opportunities to experience the wealth of cultures in the United Kingdom and beyond are not yet as well developed. The school has suitable plans to extend pupils' experiences but these are not yet fully implemented.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The large majority of children join the school working within the levels expected for their

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age. They make at least satisfactory progress, and attainment is broadly average by the time they enter Year 1. Members of staff work together well to teach literacy and numeracy skills, and children make good progress when they are working with an adult in a small group. Children are given good opportunities to improve their speaking and listening by asking each other questions and new vocabulary is promoted well. For example, children learnt 'longer than' and 'shorter than' when using a beanstalk to measure a range of objects. Learning is not always as productive when children are working on activities they have chosen for themselves. While some interesting role play and other activities linked to the theme about Jack and the Beanstalk are available, children have too little guidance to help them develop their ideas and consequently they do not all learn as quickly as they could at these times. Adults have good relationships with the children and care for them well. Consequently children settle into class routines well, behave sensibly and enjoy coming to school. Members of staff are highly dedicated and make very thorough plans for group activities. Children's learning is assessed carefully and this information is used to plan next steps. Leaders work together to develop the curriculum and are starting to analyse assessment information to look at any differences in progress between areas of learning and groups of pupils.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a high response to the parents' and carers' questionnaire. Most parents and carers are pleased with the work of the school, particularly that their children are happy and kept safe. A few parents and carers who replied to the Ofsted questionnaire would like more information about their children's progress. The inspection team agrees with parents and carers that pupils are happy and are kept safe. The school provides suitable information about pupils' progress through consultation evenings, where pupils' targets are discussed. The school welcomes parents and carers to contact members of staff if they would like further information.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Little Marlow Church of England 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 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	69	8	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	73	7	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	58	8	31	3	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	50	9	35	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	58	7	27	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	58	9	35	2	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	58	11	42	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)	12	46	11	42	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	42	12	46	2	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	35	15	58	2	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	46	10	38	2	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	65	7	27	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	69	7	27	1	4	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.



17 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Little Marlow Church of England School, Marlow SL7 3SA

Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. You made us feel welcome. Those of you that we spoke with were friendly and polite. We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. This means that it does some things well but some things could be better.

These are the best things about your school.

- You enjoy school, and are right when you tell us that you like lessons.
- It is good that you behave sensibly and are polite and friendly.
- We agree that you help to make the school better in your 'talk team'.
- Your headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school better.

These are the things we have asked your teachers to do next.

- Make sure that those of you in the Reception Year get more help when planning and carrying out your own ideas.
- Help you to always make good progress.
- Provide more opportunities for you to learn more about cultures and beliefs other than your own.
- Look really carefully at how well the school is helping you to learn in each class so that improvements can be made quickly when necessary.

Thank you once again for talking with us about your school and showing us your work. You could help your teachers by telling them if your work is too easy or too hard and making sure you do what your teachers suggest when they mark your work.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector

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