

Cold Aston Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115609
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338620
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne McNally
Headteacher	Alexandra Symondson
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, assembly, breaks and lunchtime. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, data on progress, monitoring reports, policies, planning and 41 parental questionnaires.

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

- the suitability of provision in securing good progress in writing, mathematics and for more able pupils
- the effectiveness of leaders in self-evaluating and driving improvement
- curriculum balance in Reception between the classroom and outdoors and the opportunities for children to explore things for themselves.

Information about the school

Cold Aston is a small rural primary school with three classes, which draws pupils from surrounding villages. There are low numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and few from any ethnic groups other than White British. The school has received the Healthy School Award and Activemark. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one group of Reception-aged children who are taught alongside pupils in Year 1. The new headteacher had been in post for two weeks at the time of the inspection.

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

Cold Aston is a good school with a vibrant community spirit, which provides a safe and welcoming environment for pupils. Good teaching and a rich and broad curriculum ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy school and value learning highly. Careful assessment and planning ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress in English, mathematics and science. The good progress begins in Reception and pupils quickly begin to build on this good start until they reach Year 6 where standards are above average.

Pupils' good progress is the result of good leadership, which is focused on improving achievement. Self-evaluation is accurate and has led to several improvements, where previous underachievement, in writing for example, has been addressed well and pupils now make good progress. The capacity to improve is good. Nevertheless, there are shortcomings to the process of driving improvement. Leaders have identified that monitoring of progress for different groups, particularly the more able pupils, does not involve subject leaders and teachers on a sufficiently regular basis throughout the school year. In addition, the role of subject leaders is not well established in helping teachers to share and develop best practice in the way lessons are planned and delivered. This has resulted in variations in the quality of teaching and learning between subjects and year groups.

Lessons are lively and engaging and pupils respond by working hard to do their best. Teachers have an accurate understanding of pupils' different attainments and plan lessons accordingly. However, inconsistencies remain, for example in the progress made in mathematics which varies from satisfactory to good throughout the school. In addition, not enough pupils in Years 1 and 2 reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics. The school has already identified a contributing factor, where pupils' individual targets are not sufficiently precise to make the next steps in learning clear enough in each lesson. For this reason, sufficient challenge is not always secure for pupils of all abilities but especially the more able.

Pupils feel very safe, and procedures to keep them safe are of high quality. As one commented, 'This is a very nice and kind school.' The good care, guidance and support ensure that all pupils are confident to learn and develop regardless of their individual circumstances or difficulties. The curriculum for meeting the needs of mixed-age classes is very well organised, ensuring systematic progress for pupils through the programmes of study. This is equally true of Reception, where there is a good balance of activities between indoors and outside, with suitable opportunities for children to explore things for themselves. The curriculum supports community cohesion to a satisfactory degree and there are strong links with the local village. Pupils are respectful of people whose

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lives are different to their own, but there are not enough activities to provide pupils with a deeper understanding of the wide range of cultures and beliefs found nationally. Pupils particularly appreciate the wide range of clubs, trips, visitors and projects which help bring learning to life and give them many opportunities to follow their interests. The wide range of skills pupils develop ensure that they are well prepared for their next school and future lives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater consistency of learning for more able pupils in Years 1 and 2, and in mathematics throughout the school by:
- using more precise individual targets for each pupil in lessons so that the next steps in learning are very clear and sufficient challenge is secured
- Improve the way leaders at all levels drive improvement, in particular by:
- making sure that subject leaders regularly monitor and discuss with teachers the progress different groups of pupils are making during the year
- supporting teachers more closely in developing and sharing best practice in the way lessons are planned and taught.
- Provide more opportunities to promote community cohesion by extending pupils' experiences and understanding of the wide range of cultures and beliefs found nationally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is evident in their enthusiasm to do well and the good effort the pupils put into completing activities. This means that standards are above average by the time pupils leave the school and in some years are well above. This reflects good progress from their starting points which are usually in line with those expected for their age. Standards vary considerably from year to year as pupil numbers are so small. There have been marked improvements in the progress pupils make, especially in writing where there has been outstanding progress in some year groups. Pupils progress well in science where standards are above average for pupils of all abilities. They are keen to find out more and in one good science lesson, for example, they used computers to research information about the planets and drew graphs to show their results. Progress in mathematics, although generally good, is less consistent and in a few lessons pupils find the tasks confusing. More able pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not always make expected progress, although progress overall for this age group is now good. In 2009, the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in Year 6 increased substantially reflecting successful work by the school to meet the needs of older, more able pupils.

Behaviour is good and is often exemplary, although pupils report that occasional lessons are disrupted by a few. Relationships are very positive and pupils are keen to quickly do as they are asked, responding thoughtfully to the problems they are trying to solve. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils were exceptionally well behaved as they listened very carefully to

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instructions and used their imaginations to choose materials and build a shelter. Pupils respond well to the school's provision to teach them how to lead healthy lives, not only in wanting to take plenty of exercise but in eating more fruit and vegetables. As one explained, 'We eat less chocolate and sweets.' Pupils show strong spiritual, moral and social awareness. They mix easily with others and there are very few disputes which they cannot resolve themselves. They show respect to those they meet from different backgrounds but lack sufficient experience of the range of cultures and beliefs common in Britain. Pupils are very enthusiastic about playing their part in the work of the school and in contributing locally. They have, for example, successful 'friendship fixers' where older pupils help others in the playground. Nevertheless, opportunities are missed for them to have a voice and to initiate activities, such as charitable events or mini-enterprise. This means the contribution pupils make is satisfactory rather than good. With their good attitudes to work, good basic skills, good attendance and very good team work, pupils have the skills necessary for a successful future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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?

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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Teachers provide a wide range of interesting activities which engage and enthuse pupils. Good and improved assessment systems are used in the classroom. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' attainment which they use well to plan lessons to match the needs of different groups. Pupils' targets are not always specific to individuals, or to each lesson, nor are they changed regularly enough for some. This means that pupils are not always clear about what they personally need to do to improve. As a result, a few lessons lack challenge for some, especially the more able. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and teaching assistants contribute skilfully to this work.

The good curriculum is well matched to the wide variety of needs and ages in each class. It provides a breadth of opportunities for pupils to experience nature for example, keep fit, and to practise music and drama. Pupils recently provided a Second World War lunch for local people which brought the subject to life for them. Links with other organisations to support this work are good and pupils think that these extra activities are one of the best things about school. The curriculum teaches about other countries and different religions but lacks opportunities for pupils to experience other people's lives in more depth. Good attention is paid to the key skills of literacy and numeracy in all subjects. The use of computers and other technology is more variable and, although good in some lessons, is mainly satisfactory.

Pupils are very well cared for and kept exceptionally safe. Arrangements when children first join the school are good but preparation for secondary school, although satisfactory, is not sufficiently extensive in terms of links and shared activities. Pupils with a range of personal or academic difficulties and those with very particular needs are very well cared for and links to support them are strong. This has resulted in considerable improvement in outcomes for some pupils. Effective steps are taken to improving behaviour and attendance for a very few individuals.

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 new headteacher already has a clear and well-informed view on what needs to be achieved to keep improving the school. The drive and ambition of school leaders have improved considerably the way assessment is organised and information is collected on pupils' progress. As a result, self-evaluation is more accurate in identifying key areas for improvement. This has enabled the school to secure some good improvements. In

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written work, for example, Years 4 and 5 pupils gained over one National Curriculum level last year and the number of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in Year 6 tripled. These improvements demonstrate the school's rigorous approach to ensuring good equal opportunities for all pupils. There is no discrimination evident in any aspect of the school's work.

The role of subject leaders, in supporting the drive for improvement, has been less well developed. Leaders do not systematically monitor the progress different groups of pupils make in their subjects during the year, or discuss these with teachers. In addition, their role in helping teachers in developing best practice and to improve consistency in the way lessons are taught is not formal enough.

Governors offer a wide range of suitable skills, are extremely supportive of the school and committed to continued improvement. They recognise however that their role in evaluating and monitoring the school's work and providing sufficient challenge is not as well developed. For example, although safeguarding procedures are of high quality, the role of governors in monitoring them is underdeveloped.

The way the school promotes community cohesion is satisfactory. There are well integrated and effective activities with the local community and some links internationally. There are though few links nationally with people from communities very different to this largely traditional rural setting with which to raise pupils' awareness and understanding of modern British society.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

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

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Children in Reception learn in a stimulating, well organised and caring environment where they are kept safe and nurtured well. Good links with parents and pre-school providers mean they settle quickly. Children soon begin to explore the wealth of activities set out for them. They listen carefully to staff and show increasing confidence to try out their ideas and share their thoughts. The provision is well led and managed and leads to good teaching and good progress being made. This means that children are secure in gaining skills in all the areas of learning, especially in emerging reading and numeracy skills. They therefore enter Year 1 with skills a little above those found nationally. In one lively session, children were very busy building a 'quarry', 'painting' a fence and setting out a tea party. Many of them use computers very competently, for example in making a lovely rainbow. Thorough assessment ensures that children's skills are built upon systematically, although individual targets lack the precision necessary to secure consistently good progress for all. The curriculum is broad and is very well planned to make the most of learning in the attractive outside space. It is well balanced between direct teaching and enabling children to find things out for themselves. Children benefit greatly from watching their Year 1 peers and sometimes joining them. Staff, including highly skilled teaching assistants, are very effective in helping children develop necessary language skills and also to behave well and cooperate with one another.

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

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly appreciate the 'family feel' of the school and the supportive atmosphere. A considerable number value the quality of teaching and support staff. Several believe there is excellent care and consideration taken with individual pupils. A very small minority of parents expressed a variety of concerns some of which are reflected within the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cold Aston'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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	68	12	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	81	8	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	46	19	46	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	61	11	27	2	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	29	71	9	22	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	56	15	37	2	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	71	12	29	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)	19	46	17	42	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	56	15	37	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	42	15	37	2	5	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	37	20	49	1	2	3	7
The school is led and managed effectively	21	51	13	32	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	68	10	24	1	2	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.



24 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cold Aston Church of England Primary School, Cheltenham, GL54 3BN

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for break and seeing your lessons. Your school is a good school with many interesting things going on, just as you described. Staff work hard to keep developing the school and, for this reason, your work is getting better each year. Skilful teaching helps you to make good and increasing progress in your lessons. As a result, you are doing particularly well in writing. We like the way you really enjoy your lessons and always try to do your best. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and interesting and we can see that they help you to do well. However, we have asked them to make sure that those of you who learn quickly in Years 1 and 2 and all of you in mathematics are more certain to make good progress. Therefore, we would like them to set you more detailed individual targets so that the next steps in your learning are very clear and provide more challenge. We would like to see your teachers supported more, in sharing ideas on the best way to teach certain subjects, and in monitoring your progress regularly. We are sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by working hard and sharing your ideas.

The good curriculum provides many opportunities for you to take part in lots of different activities which you clearly welcome. We like the way you eagerly take on responsibility. For example, the way you look after each other, and act as 'friendship fixers' in the playground, is heartening. Your behaviour is good, especially in the way you value learning. You show good respect for others, including those who have different beliefs and ways of living. We have, though, asked the school to increase your experience of people nationally who may lead quite different lives to yourselves.

You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you very safe and looks after you very well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet.

We think that this, alongside your mature attitudes to working with others, helps you to be well prepared for your next school and future lives.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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