

North Cerney CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115640
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338629
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Warrick Heathcote
Headteacher	Jane Burr
Date of previous school inspection	5 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector spent about two thirds of his time looking at pupils' learning, including visits to 11 lessons and observations of five teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and governors. He observed the school's work, and looked at school self-evaluation documents, external monitoring reports and development planning. Thirty-one parental questionnaires were analysed as well as those from school staff and the pupils.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which school leaders and governors promote high standards and achievement
- the challenge for higher attainers and measures to improve the achievement of boys, especially in English
- how successfully information from the new progress tracking system is used to ensure there is effective support for learning
- whether the focus on communities outside the village is as effective as that for the local community.

Information about the school

North Cerney CofE Primary School is much smaller than most primary schools. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. An above-average proportion have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have behavioural, social and/or emotional needs. A significant proportion of pupils do not complete their whole primary education at the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are included in the mixed-age Reception and Years 1/2 class.

The school has been awarded Eco School, Healthy School and Activemark status. It is part of a collaborative grouping of local primary schools.

There have been continuing and significant changes in staffing over the last four years. The headteacher took up post in January 2009 and works for 70 per cent of the week. An assistant headteacher was appointed in December 2009 for the remaining 30 per cent of the time in order to share some of the headteacher's workload.

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

North Cerney CofE Primary is a good school. It has sustained its strengths during a recent period of significant staff change and has improved pupils' progress, so it mirrors the quality of teaching which is good, and strengthened their attainment, which is average. Much of the improvement has emerged since the headteacher joined the school. She leads the school with determination, high expectations and sensitivity. The acting headteacher has already been successful in helping raise the progress of pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities. This is now good. The staff have thrived under the new leadership and show many good skills in their teaching and care, guidance and support of the pupils.

The turnover of senior staff in the past meant the school did not make as rapid improvement as expected. Parents and carers were concerned about the impact of this on their children's progress and some still have reservations about school leadership. However, it is very evident that leadership is good and that the governors give the necessary guidance, support and challenge to ensure pupils' education is effective. Some innovations to improve school performance are very new, for example the system of tracking pupils' progress, and have yet to make a full contribution to school effectiveness. Despite this, pupils' work and the level of additional support provided for some groups, such as the higher attainers, are now much more sharply focused on their specific needs. Thus, learning is enjoyed by the pupils, who work enthusiastically, purposefully and productively. The school ensures that there are equal opportunities for pupils to do well, as the higher attainers are now making greater progress than previously.

The school enjoys a widely held reputation for its care, guidance and support. This is an accurate perception. Pupils are all safeguarded carefully because the school is vigilant in reviewing and updating procedures and in training staff and governors about their responsibilities. The ethos of the school is based on the encouragement and counselling of all pupils to do their best, whether in their academic or personal development. A few pupils, particularly boys, still present some challenging behaviour, but this is being managed very successfully and they are making greater strides in their learning as a result. The behaviour of most pupils is good and relationships are harmonious and supportive. The pupils enjoy other pupils' successes, as observed in the Celebration Assembly, which ended with grace, a rousing 'Rub a dub dub, thanks for our grub!' The curriculum is good. It is enhanced through the positive partnerships with local schools, community groups and other agencies which enable the school to provide learning experiences it otherwise might find difficult. A successful link has been made with a much larger school in outer London. The pupils talk confidently of how this link is

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helping them learn more about the lives and culture of people from other communities. It is evident the school promotes community cohesion well and that it does not tolerate any types of discrimination. There are now plans in place to link with a school overseas to broaden pupils' horizons even more. At present, in some lessons the staff control the learning too much, which tends to reduce the potential for pupils to build independence, initiative and responsibility, especially among the higher attainers. School leaders recognise this tendency and have plans to develop a curriculum where pupils have ample practical and self-regulated learning.

The new system of sharing learning targets and discussing their progress with the pupils is established, although some inconsistencies in practice remain, which means further improvement to encourage pupils to think more deeply about their learning is possible. The school has a well-honed system of checking and evaluating the quality of provision through its monitoring of work in the classroom. This enables leaders to set very relevant improvement priorities that everyone is determined to uphold. There is good capacity for the continued improvement of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the system of setting and sharing learning targets with pupils and ensure they have ample opportunities to talk and write about their successes and difficulties.
- Develop the curriculum so that learning promotes pupils' independence, initiative and responsibility.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Because year groups vary in size from year to year and pupil numbers rarely exceed ten in any one year group, it is difficult to analyse trends in progress and attainment.

However, the available data suggests progress has speeded up, with a dip during the period of staff change, but with renewed acceleration over the last year. Progress is good in Reception. The children are enthusiastic learners who bubble with fun as they take the role of pirates who have to 'fill the boat with diesel' despite the snow showers. They quickly build new skills and knowledge from their below expected starting level.

In lessons, pupils make good progress. This also shows in their books, particularly English, where the work completed recently is of a higher standard than at the start of the school year. Where a few boys show challenging behaviour, progress is lessened, although it is satisfactory. It is evident that staff are creating the right conditions for successful learning for these few pupils and that they are ready for increased academic challenge, more independence in learning and a faster pace for their work. The pupils talk confidently together as they work and many ask as many questions as they answer, which shows the potential that more-able learners have to reach even higher results compared to 2009, when the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was below average in English and science. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are just as keen on learning as other pupils. They respond well to their teaching

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assistants, who motivate them effectively. Pupils who join the school in later years soon settle to good learning in lessons and say 'North Cerney is much better than my old school.'

Pupils develop well as people. They have a secure understanding of their own safety. They know where the risks lie in school, such as the steep steps to the field, and follow the safety rules. They know why the doors are all secured during school time. They are also appreciative that the swimming, physical education and games activities they enjoy so much contribute strongly to their health. The pupils seated at the 'Table of the Week' talk enthusiastically of the healthy school meals, which come from a local private school. The meal to celebrate the Chinese New Year was clearly a high spot in their week. Pupils' lesser knowledge of cultures overseas, their incomplete independent learning skills and the challenging behaviour of a few pupils are key areas that school leaders have identified for improvement in order to strengthen pupils' good personal development further.

The school's strong Church of England tradition is influential in the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Parents and carers value this heritage for its contribution to the caring, happy, family ethos in school.

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	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
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has been improved well. In assessing its strengths, leaders are increasingly using pupils' learning as success indicators. This ensures staff are alert to the need to make sure all pupils work briskly, productively and with good purpose, which they do. A typical lesson allows ample time for pupils to talk together about the next step in learning. When most effective, this discussion also focuses on what pupils find straightforward, what is challenging and the ways in which to overcome difficulties. However, this is not consistent in all lessons, which means that pupils' progress, whilst good, could be brisker.

The tasks in lessons are well matched to the age and ability of the pupils, although learning is sometimes specified too precisely, which does not give pupils enough opportunities to rely on their own talents and initiative. Despite this, the curriculum is good. It is well enriched by the programme of out-of-school visits and extra-curricular activities. Pupils talk expressively about their visit to Swindon Railway Museum, for example, which clearly left its mark in terms of their increased historical and technological knowledge. There is good emphasis on arts subjects, with fruitful partnerships with visiting artists and craftspeople. Information and communication technology is used effectively to underpin knowledge in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The strong partnership with another local school contributes to the success of computer-based work. Incidentally, pupils are very aware of the need for internet safety.

Vulnerable pupils are cared for with compassion, sensitivity and the necessary confidentiality. They are confident to talk to staff when they are unhappy, unsettled or unsure. They are comforted by the response and ready to return to good working after the conversation. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been improved recently, although senior leaders accept that there is ongoing work to make this a strength to match the other elements of care, guidance and support. Some strategies to support pupils with such needs have not always been totally effective. Thus, the school has reviewed the degree to which the work for pupils with special needs is precisely focused on small step-by-step learning targets. The improvements made are already showing positive influence and these pupils are making good progress, although work continues to ensure this remains consistent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

There exists an ambitious lead provided by the very talented headteacher, and staff have a clear sense of purpose; they want to do their best for the pupils. This shows in the improved quality of teaching, learning and rate of pupils' progress. All staff carry their leadership and management responsibilities well. They know how well provision affects progress and what is needed for improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning, for example, has identified that, in some lessons, teachers control the learning too closely. Improvement priorities have been identified to overcome this. Leaders create robust success criteria for such work and make sure the deadline for improvement is met. This thoroughness of approach extends to the vigilance shown in the safeguarding of pupils and in the innovative approach to the good promotion of community cohesion. Pupils in Years 5'6 were very clearly enthused by the chance to retell a story from Africa with great originality, expression and eloquence.

Governors are astute and are as much part of everyday leadership as the staff. The very effective recent staff appointments reflect their full understanding of the school's needs and those of the staff and pupils. They provide good support and challenge school leaders properly to ensure the school is doing its best for every pupil. Governors play a key role in the promotion of equal opportunities and the confronting of any form of discrimination. They maintain a watchful eye and ensure the school has up-to-date policies and practice to meet all statutory requirements.

Some innovations made by leaders and governors are quite new and are yet to show the full impact on learning and progress. However, in cases such as the revised management structure for special educational needs provision, the early signs are all positive. In this case, pupils with specific special educational needs and/or disabilities are already progressing as well as the other pupils and the more precise match of work to their stage of development has potential to accelerate this further.

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
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Reception work and play with joy. Their learning is fun, as seen when some of them dripped aromatic liquid from a pipette into a harmless white powder. They talked animatedly of their observations ' the smells, sounds and sights as the two substances mixed. Their knowledge and understanding of the world about them increased rapidly during this session. The children are equally skilled at more formal, adult-led learning and enjoy books and the first steps towards reading and writing. The children move briskly towards the expected outcomes at the end of Reception, although work remains to ensure the more able always reach the higher learning goals, especially in aspects of literacy and their physical development.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The staff are as enthusiastic as the children and enjoy being with them. Planning and assessment are both geared to children's needs, whether in learning or in their personal growth. The accommodation is used well both indoors and out.

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

Whilst most views of parents and carers are positive, two strands of concern are evident. About a third of those responding showed caution in judging the quality of leadership. Written comments showed these parents and carers have yet to be convinced that leadership and management has been restored to its previous quality. The inspection demonstrates that the school is in good hands.

About a quarter of parents and carers showed concern about behaviour and its management. In the past, a few pupils spoiled things for the rest by their poor behaviour. Behaviour in school is now good and often excellent. It will take a while longer for the improvements in behaviour to show through in these pupils' increased progress, although the signs are good as staff are increasingly building on pupils' enthusiasms rather than weaknesses.

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Most parents and carers say their children enjoy school. The pupils say the same in their questionnaire. A clear majority of parents and carers say they are happy with their child's education at the school. The higher proportion making a positive response to the final question compared with the behaviour and leadership ones suggests that the concerns are being eroded.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Cerney CofE 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 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 50 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	65	8	26	3	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	39	17	55	2	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	23	22	71	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	29	20	65	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	26	23	74	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	26	19	61	3	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	42	17	55	1	3	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)	9	29	17	55	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	26	20	65	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	19	17	55	7	23	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	29	14	45	5	16	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	9	29	11	35	8	26	2	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	39	15	48	4	13	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.



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15 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Cerney CofE Primary School, Cirencester GL7 7BZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. It was great fun to share your lessons and other events while I was with you. I will remember the 'Rub a dub dub' grace for a long time.

You helped me find out about your school and its work. You told me it is a good school that you enjoy coming to. I agree with you; North Cerney is a good school and I think it has a number of strengths.

- You make good progress and reach the expected standards in your work.
- Children in Reception do well and have a lot of fun.
- Your lessons are interesting and you work together well.
- You are taught well.
- You learn about many different things and your art, music and sports work is of good quality.
- All the adults look after you carefully.
- Your school is well led and your headteacher expects you to do your best.

In my report, I have listed two main areas where your school could be improved.

- Make sure you have plenty of chances to talk and write about how well you are learning.
- Allow you to work independently in lessons and to use your initiative in planning how to approach your work.

If you are not sure what 'initiative' means, look it up in the dictionary or talk to your parent, carer or teacher about it. In doing this, you will be sharing your learning with them and helping your teachers make these two improvements.

I hope you do well in your school work.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington

Lead inspector

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