

Silchester Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116369
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338806
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Babs Rodgers
Headteacher	Susan Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	5 September 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. A small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school were also spoken to. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at analyses of pupils' progress; development planning and monitoring, especially with regard to teaching and writing; local authority reports; a range of policies and procedures, including those associated with safeguarding; curriculum planning documents and a sample of pupils' work. They also scrutinised questionnaires returned by 105 parents and carers, 80 pupils and 25 staff.

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

- how effectively the school is addressing the weaknesses which led to a decline in standards in Years 1 and 2 during the last academic year
- the quality of the procedures for monitoring and supporting teaching
- how well the school is improving the quality of assessment and marking in order to support progress
- how effectively the school is maintaining the strengths in provision and progress in Years 3 to 6.

Information about the school

This is a small school serving several villages in the local area and to which some pupils travel much further. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with only a very small proportion with English as an additional language and at an early stage of learning English. The school holds the Investors in People, Healthy School and Sportsmark awards.

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

Silchester Church of England Primary is a good school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe and happy there, Attendance levels are high and pupils make good progress. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is excellent as a result of the consistently outstanding teaching seen in these classes. Consequently, by the time pupils leave, standards are high and pupils' achievement is exceptionally good. This, together with the older pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, their exceptional ability to reflect on their work and the mature and thoughtful way in which they work with one another, means they are especially well prepared for the future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop an excellent spiritual awareness and make very effective links between this and their moral and social responsibilities. As a result, their contribution to school life and the local and the wider community is outstanding. In particular, pupils worked extremely well with the village community to help Silchester to win the 'South Village of the Year' award.

Pupils' welfare and needs are at the forefront of this caring school's work. Excellent induction procedures help Reception children settle into school quickly and progress well. High quality support for pupils with special learning or behavioural needs, provided by excellent special educational needs co-ordination, results in their outstanding progress, with virtually all reaching average standards by the time they leave. The older more able pupils do exceptionally well, with the proportion achieving higher levels in the Year 6 national tests far exceeding that seen in most schools. Until last year, the younger more able pupils progressed well, but staffing changes led to fewer reaching the higher levels in the 2009 Year 2 tests. Overall performance in writing was also of concern. Standards fell, which concerned a small minority of parents. Through excellent support and rearrangement to staffing these weaknesses are being successfully addressed. Younger pupils, including the more able, now make the progress of which they are capable, although the school recognises that still more needs to be done to ensure their progress is as good as for others.

The curriculum is developing well to take greater account of pupils' needs and interests, with the strategies to improve writing helping to enhance progress throughout the school. Most lessons meet the needs of more able pupils, although some teachers are less skilled at judging what pupils can do already and setting tasks to move them on well. A minority of teachers are still developing the skills needed to track pupils' progress carefully, especially in writing. Good marking helps pupils recognise what they have achieved and how they can improve. Effective relationships between staff and pupils encourage positive behaviour and hard work. Many pupils commented that teachers are very kind and listen to their thoughts and views. Both pupils and their parents raised

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some concerns over incidences of poor behaviour. However, recent consultation between staff, governors, pupils and parents has helped develop more effective procedures for managing this. During the inspection, behaviour was uniformly good and often exemplary in lessons.

Good self-evaluation helps senior leaders drive forward improvement well. Improved assessment and tracking procedures support current priorities effectively, including improving the quality of teaching. As a result, no unsatisfactory teaching remains. Governors support the school exceptionally well, including through their links with parents and the local community. These strengths, together with the school's success in improving standards and progress since its last inspection, give confidence that it is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly for younger pupils, through:
 - enhancing teachers' skills in judging the level at which individual pupils are working
 - increasing teachers' ability to plan work that helps pupils to do their very best, particularly the most able.
- Build on and extend the procedures in place to raise standards in writing, particularly by developing staff skills in using regular assessment information to track pupils' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Over the past three years, older pupils have made excellent progress, largely because of very high quality teaching in Years 5 and 6. Standards have risen well to significantly above average by Year 6, indicating outstanding achievement. Inspection evidence confirms that this is also true for current pupils, who are on course to do as well as in previous years. Older pupils are extremely mature learners whose work is always carefully carried out and very well presented. For example, Year 6 pupils use their understanding of mathematical formulae extremely well to solve problems. This quality of learning is also evident in Year 5, where the thoughtful analysis of the pros and cons for graffiti, stimulated by investigations around the village, led to some exceptionally well-argued cases for and against this. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress.

On entry to Reception, children's skills are at the level expected for their age. Good progress in both their academic and personal development ensures that standards are slightly above average by the end of the year. Standards at Year 2 had been rising well, but fell last year because of weaker teaching, largely resulting from difficulties in appointing new staff. This is now being tackled well by increasing the accuracy of assessment and level of challenge in activities. It has helped improve writing, with Year 2 pupils using adventurous words and similes to describe the sea. Practical activities also

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enhance progress, for example, Year 1 pupils confidently built symmetrical shapes out of cubes. However, although Year 2 pupils are making up gaps in their learning, the full effect of strategies on raising standards is not yet apparent.

Older pupils are very mature and thoughtful young people, understanding their rights and recognising their responsibility towards others. Excellent relationships are evident in their willingness to listen to different views and their thoughtful discussions about how to complete a shared task. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community, as school councillors, playground buddies and members of the Recycling and Fair Trade Groups, is excellent. They know how to lead a healthy lifestyle, welcoming the healthy eating routines in school. Pupils are well aware of how to keep safe, confident that staff look after them well, although a small minority of pupils are concerned about behaviour.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils are very well cared for and kept safe and free from harm at all times. The school regularly seeks the views of pupils, parents and carers, responding well, for example, to the views expressed in the joint working group which looked at behavioural issues.

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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Vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well supported, with the school seeking expert support for those who speak English as an additional language.

Practical tasks in many subjects help pupils learn easily. New topics are introduced with exciting activities which engage pupils' interest and motivation, such as the visit to the Natural History Museum. Linking subjects together helps make learning relevant, giving pupils good opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills. Many visits, visitors and out-of-school clubs, such as the high quality music activities, promote learning. A focus on improving writing has enhanced progress through encouraging younger pupils to 'talk through a story' before writing it. More accurate assessment information supports planning for future development, although its full effect on younger pupils' progress has yet to be seen.

Teaching has much improved over the last few months, although it still varies in quality. A common approach to behaviour management and use of different resources has improved the pace of lessons and pupils' understanding, with Reception children enjoying using the interactive whiteboard to order numbers. 'Talk partners' help pupils to sound out ideas and their individual targets are used effectively to encourage progress. All staff recognise how well pupils should be progressing, with teachers in the oldest year groups setting very challenging tasks which they explain exceptionally well. They also provide excellent support throughout lessons to help pupils complete tasks. Other teachers occasionally underestimate what the more able pupils can achieve and are less skilled at intervening to move them on when they are ready.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy lead the school well, with subject leaders successfully driving forward priorities such as improving progress in writing. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked to help identify where provision needs to improve and where some pupils may need extra help. This also helps to ensure that all pupils' equality of opportunity is promoted well.

Excellent support is provided for less experienced staff by a very experienced mentor who works well with senior leaders to raise the quality of teaching. This is one example of the way resources are used effectively to support pupils' learning.

Governors are highly skilled and use their expertise to especially good effect, for example in ensuring safe recruitment. They provide exactly the right level of challenge

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and support and consequently relationships with staff are very good, with governors' contribution to monitoring and development work being excellent. The school's partnerships with parents and carers and a range of other schools and agencies provide good support for pupils' welfare and education. Staff and governors respond well to parents' and carers' views, for example by setting up a text message system to inform them of important events. Safeguarding issues are addressed effectively through robust health and safety checks and rigorous arrangements for staff vetting and child protection. The school has made a good start in promoting community cohesion, especially through links with the wider local area and overseas. Further links are being established with areas that reflect the wide diversity of 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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Excellent induction procedures and the high quality care provided help children settle in to school and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Adults are skilled in helping children to learn and resources are carefully organised so children can discover things for themselves. For example, they enjoyed making a circuit for toy cars out of guttering, altering the slope to see if the cars could go faster. The secure outdoor space supports learning well, although the lack of a covered area limits its use in bad weather.

Progress is especially strong in children's personal development and the acquisition of early literacy and numeracy skills. Children happily persevere on their own with very little supervision, or work well together in a group. They love the activities where they help 'Fred the Frog' to sound out letters and 'Tom Bear's Challenge' to put the numbers in order. The many role-play activities are very popular, with children reminding the

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inspector that 'the Post Office is closed because we are stamping the letters for the postman to collect'.

Children's work is carefully assessed, with the information recorded in very effective learning journals. Parents and carers also contribute well to these and feel very much involved in helping their child to learn. Senior leaders support staff effectively and the provision is well led and managed.

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

A very large majority of parents and carers have positive views about most aspects of the school's work and value how well the school cares for their children and promotes a healthy lifestyle. Parents and carers think teaching is good and pupils' needs are effectively met so that they make good progress and are well prepared for the future. Most feel that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour, although a number raised issues about bullying. Inspectors note that staff and governors have responded well to their concerns and consider the new procedures are effectively promoting good behaviour. Inspectors judge the high turnover of staff, which concerned a small minority of parents and carers, to be largely outside the school's control and that it has addressed the difficulties in appointing new staff well. Inspectors do not agree with other concerns, which a very small minority of parents and carers raised, relating to leadership and management, parents' and carers' involvement in their children's learning and the school's response to parents' and carers' views, and consider these areas to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Silchester 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 169 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	58	37	35	7	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	51	48	46	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	33	63	60	4	4	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	34	56	53	10	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	43	51	49	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	31	57	54	15	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	51	51	49	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)	30	29	56	53	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	29	62	59	6	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	27	45	43	26	25	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	22	57	54	15	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	32	49	47	15	14	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	49	44	42	10	10	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.



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Silchester Church of England Primary School, Reading
RG7 2NJ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our time talking to you and seeing all the things you do. We think you are very polite and helpful and I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us. We think your school is good and are delighted that you and your parents agree.

Here are some of the things we found that were especially good about the school.

- Progress is outstanding in the oldest classes because of the excellent teaching, and standards by Year 6 are much higher than in most schools.
- By the time you leave you are excellent learners, very mature and thoughtful young people and you support the work of the school and your local area especially well.
- Reception children get off to a good start because of the excellent arrangements to help them settle in to school.
- Staff provide practical and interesting activities that help you to learn easily.
- You receive an excellent level of care and support in school and those of you who find learning or behaviour difficult are supported exceptionally well.
- The work that the governors do is excellent, especially in working with staff, taking account of your parents' and carers' concerns and helping you to take part in lots of village and church events.

Here are some of the things we have asked the school to improve.

- Make sure that all teachers help you to do your very best.
- Carry on helping you to improve your writing. You can help by trying to do as well as we saw in the lessons during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson

Lead Inspector

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