

Church Cowley St James Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123139
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340289
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	David Wynford Jones

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	467
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Lesley Williams
Headteacher	Jonathan Walker
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited two assemblies and 21 lessons, observing 16 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school improvement plan. Inspectors analysed 57 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- pupils' attainment and progress in writing
- the use of assessment to inform teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels, particularly middle managers and governors, in driving school improvement.

Information about the school

Church Cowley St James C of E Primary is larger than the majority of primary schools. Nearly half of the pupils are from a minority ethnic background. This is well above that found in most schools, as is the proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. There is a wide range of nationalities in the school. The main ethnic groups are of Asian or Asian British origin. More pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual starting and leaving times than found in the majority of schools.

The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. However, a smaller percentage of pupils hold a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two part-time Nursery and two full-time Reception classes.

The headteacher was appointed in January 2010 and the deputy headteacher the previous September.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school now provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Fairly shortly after its previous inspection there was discontinuity in the leadership and management of the school. As a result, it did not progress as well as it should. Following the local authority's review of the school in the autumn term 2009 and the recent appointments of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, there has been a concerted and successful drive to bring about improvements. This has focused on developing assessment procedures, improving the quality of teaching and developing the skills of middle leaders and the governing body. The improvements are beginning to have an impact but have yet to become embedded.

The majority of the children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children tend to make quicker progress in the Nursery than in the Reception classes because provision is better matched to their needs. The attainment of pupils in the current Year 6 in English, mathematics and science is below that expected but is broadly average. These pupils have made satisfactory progress from a below average-starting point on entry to Year 3. This continues the three-year pattern of satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2. Historically, pupils made slower progress in the Reception classes and in Key Stage 1. As a consequence, their attainment at the end of Year 2 was often well below the national average. This is now beginning to be resolved. Over the last six months pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has accelerated. However, their attainment remains below the expected levels.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving because better use is made of more accurate assessments of pupils' work, planning is sharper and tasks are increasingly being matched to pupils' abilities. As yet, not all planning consistently and clearly leads to work that challenges all groups of pupils. In some lessons expectations are not sufficiently high, particularly for the more-able pupils. This is because links are not made to National Curriculum levels. Targets are set in English and pupils are more aware of what they have to do to improve. Targets are not evident in other subjects. Across the school, pupils' progress is hindered by their lack of understanding of their targets, their limited use of subject-specific vocabulary and the lack of opportunities to undertake mathematical and scientific investigations. There are limited opportunities for them to work independently. Nevertheless, pupils are increasingly enjoying their learning because a new approach to teaching the curriculum is being developed. A good start has been made in making links between different subjects and pupils are beginning to see the relevance of their learning. Information and communication technology is used reasonably consistently to enhance lessons. Opportunities for improving attainment in

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writing, particularly that of the boys, are increasingly being used to address weaknesses, but pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are working effectively with staff, governors and the local authority to improve provision and outcomes. They ensure that the school provides a satisfactory level of care and pupils' personal development is promoted satisfactorily. Based on a secure evaluation of the school, they have a good understanding of what the school needs to do and are providing determined leadership. A secure start has been made on improving the quality of teaching and developing assessment procedures. However, teachers do not get sufficient opportunities to share and build on good practice. Middle leaders and governors are enthusiastic and positive about the changes. They are focusing on strategies to raise attainment and develop their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have yet to develop their skills in rigorously interrogating assessment information and evaluating the impact of teaching on learning. Action plans are in place, but the criteria by which they are evaluated are not sufficiently aligned to attainment, progress and achievement measures. Nevertheless, in view of the progress made over the last six months, the drive of the leadership team and the continuing support of the local authority, the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics throughout the school, but particularly in the Reception classes and Key Stage 1, by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring all pupils further develop their use and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary
 - giving pupils more opportunities to undertake investigations in mathematics and to work independently
 - ensuring pupils understand their targets, and how to achieve them, across all subjects.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching by:
 - raising the expectations of pupils and staff by providing more opportunities to share and build on good practice
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan work that challenges all groups of pupils, particularly the more able.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers at all levels in contributing to whole school improvement by:
 - ensuring that senior and middle leaders and governors fully understand their respective roles and responsibilities

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- refining their action plans to focus on outcomes for pupils
- analysing and using assessment information to monitor pupils' progress against their targets
- rigorously evaluating the impact of teaching on learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' growing enjoyment of school was evident in most lessons visited. Their behaviour is satisfactory overall but at times, particularly in lessons where they are stimulated, it is good. Most spoke positively about their school experiences. However, some say that the work is not sufficiently challenging. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of healthy living and many are keen to adopt a healthy lifestyle and take part in physical activities. They speak knowledgeably about healthy eating, reflecting the impact of the school's recent work on promoting it. Pupils value their school community. They are keen to become members of the school council and to take responsibility. They enjoy the role as 'Sunshine Friends,' helping younger children in the dining hall and in the playground. Pupils' involvement with the wider community is relatively underdeveloped. Pupils are developing a satisfactory understanding of other cultures. They show respect for each other and get on well together. Attendance is monitored systematically. Any absence is followed up quickly. The school has taken action where attendance is low. This has resulted in a reduction in the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent. Nevertheless, there remains a small group whose attendance is unsatisfactory.

Throughout the school pupils are given reasonable opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. They appreciate the opportunities to discuss matters with a 'talk partner' and share their ideas. This is contributing much to their social development. Pupils' attainment and progress in writing are less secure. Many pupils do not have the basic grammatical skills and their spelling is weak. Their use of language is cautious. Nevertheless, the school's focus on improving attainment in writing, by linking writing to a specific purpose, is beginning to have an impact. Pupils in Year 3 used their imagination and developed their writing skills well when drafting a letter to NASA, the American space agency, reporting a sighting of an alien. Pupils' investigation skills in mathematics and science are not fully developed. Pupils are becoming more confident as they are given more opportunities to undertake practical activities and to record the outcomes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as do pupils learning English as an additional language. There is no major difference in the performance between the minority ethnic groups. Pupils' broadly average attainment provides them with a satisfactory basis for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are confident in the use of computers to support learning. Most lessons are adequately planned and engage the pupils. In some lessons the learning objectives are not clear and do not focus on what the pupils are going to learn. In these cases, groups of pupils are not challenged, the pace is slow and teachers do not take the opportunity to consolidate basic skills. There are some examples of the good use of assessment to set work which challenges pupils, but this is not evident in all classes. Marking does not consistently provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. There is limited evidence of self- and peer-assessment.

Provision for developing the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. Staff are in the process of revising the curriculum to develop a more creative approach in which basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are consolidated and extended through other subjects. Teaching assistants and additional resources are used satisfactorily to support pupils who find learning difficult and those who are at the early stages of learning English. The curriculum is enhanced appropriately by links to organisations and a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits. These and other activities promote the pupils' personal development satisfactorily.

The care provided for pupils ensures that the school satisfactorily supports the most vulnerable pupils. It works appropriately with a wide range of agencies to promote pupils' learning. The school is keen to promote links with parents and to involve them in their children's learning. This is still at a relatively early stage of development.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team provides clear direction for the development of the school. The recently introduced systems for recording and analysing pupils' attainment and progress are resulting in the work of the school being scrutinised with increasing rigour. There is a sharper focus on identifying the precise areas for development. As a result, expectations are rising and staff are increasingly being held to account. Governors take their roles seriously. They fully acknowledge that they did not monitor the work of the school with sufficient rigour and have attended training to improve their understanding of their responsibilities. There is now a greater focus on the provision and outcomes for pupils.

Governors ensure that the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures meet the latest requirements and promote equality of opportunity satisfactorily. They ensure that pupils are welcomed to the school and all are included. There is no discrimination. The school's contribution to promoting community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is striving to be more involved in the local community and to involve the parents and residents in the life of the school. The school takes part in events such as the Cowley Carnival and activities with local schools. Community cohesion beyond the local area has still to be developed. Links with schools in other parts of the United Kingdom have yet to be established. However, pupils have the opportunity to write to pen pals in India.

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	3
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

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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

Good relationships and sound induction procedures ensure children settle quickly into the Nursery. They quickly grow in confidence and enjoy learning in a safe environment. They follow instructions, develop their social skills and behave well. Progress in the Reception classes is less secure. This is because of weaknesses in the use of assessment to inform planning. Often the average and more-able children are not challenged. Consequently, they do not reach their full potential. There is some variation in provision between the two Reception classes. Overall, there is a reasonable balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. However, at times, the children spend too long on the carpet listening to the teacher. Adults do not always provide the children with sufficient opportunities to find things out for themselves.

Classrooms are organised and children's work is celebrated and displayed effectively. Planning ensures that all areas of learning are covered. There is a strong focus on promoting the children's skills in communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and number. Appropriate use is made of the outdoor area. Its use to support learning across the early learning goals has not been fully exploited, especially in communication, language and literacy. Better use is made of the outdoor area by the Nursery.

The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Systems for assessing and recording children's attainment are in place but assessments are not always accurate. The information has not been analysed sufficiently to identify precise areas for development and to bring about rapid improvements.

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

The response rate from parents and carers was low. However, the majority of those

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who responded were supportive of the school's work and agreed with each statement. Their positive views are generally confirmed by inspection evidence. Most parents and carers stated that their children feel safe and enjoy school.

A few parents and carers stated that the school does not fully meet the needs of all pupils or provide parents and carers with sufficient information on their child's progress, and pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Inspectors found that the school has not been fully meeting the needs of all pupils.

However, the recent changes are addressing this issue. The involvement of parents is an area the school is keen to promote. Pupils' preparation for their future lives is satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cowley St James C of E Primary 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 467 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	40	32	56	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	30	37	65	3	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	14	34	60	15	26	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	19	41	72	5	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	16	46	81	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	23	36	63	7	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	26	37	65	4	7	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)	8	14	27	47	11	19	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	14	34	60	11	19	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	5	40	70	7	12	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	12	38	67	9	16	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	8	14	40	70	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	28	37	65	4	7	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Church Cowley St James C of E Primary School, Oxford OX4 3HQ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We thought that you were polite and your behaviour was satisfactory. We were sorry we did not get to see all the Year 4 pupils as they were away on a residential visit, but we did look at their books.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. We were pleased to see that over the last six months or so it is getting better. Overall, you make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 6, your attainment in English and mathematics is broadly similar to that found in most schools. Inspectors believe you could do better and have asked that teachers and senior staff always make sure that they teach well, assess your work carefully and use these assessments to plan work that will really challenge you, especially in writing and mathematics. It is really important that you get off to a quick start in the Reception classes and in Key Stage 1, so we have asked that there is a particular focus on these year groups.

To help your teachers do this we have also asked the senior staff and governors to help them by looking at the assessment information and using it to check that the work is right for you and that they have opportunities to see and share good practice.

We were pleased when you told us that you like school. From the registers we see that most of you attend regularly, but were very sorry to see that some of you do not attend as often as you should. Please remember, to make your school better you must also play your part by always attending and always trying your best.

Good luck for the future and remember to keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones

Lead inspector

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