

Orchards Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133782
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	341412
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Mason
Headteacher	Mrs H Williams
Date of previous school inspection	0 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observation records, governors' minutes, pupils' work and other assessment information. Inspectors scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 30 parents or carers.

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

- the impact of measures to raise standards and achievement, especially in English across the school
- how effectively the school is improving attendance and reducing exclusions
- the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in accelerating pupils' progress
- the impact of leaders in tackling any underperformance.

Information about the school

This is larger than the average primary school. It has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and two Reception classes. Almost three quarters of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Just over a quarter are from mainly Eastern European minority ethnic groups. Many of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including moderate learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties, is above average. The school has gained the Active Mark award and an award for its gardening. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2009. The school has had many changes of staff including three headteachers, or acting headteachers, in the past two years.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school has been through a very difficult eighteen months, during which pupils' attainment has fluctuated from below average to low. The progress of pupils is inadequate. Too many pupils are underachieving, including significant groups such as those who are entitled to free school meals and more able pupils. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has been declining for three years and is now very low. The rate of progress is insufficient to enable pupils to catch up to where they should be by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6.

The new headteacher has worked effectively to improve the school in the short time she has been in post, and has been able to transform the learning environment, so that displays are attractive and colourful and there are interesting exhibitions of artefacts to engage pupils. She has done much to raise staff morale from a very low ebb and has set out a compelling vision for the school that many staff are willing to embrace. Under her strong leadership, behaviour has improved, as pupils have been given clear boundaries, and exclusions have reduced substantially. She has established good relations with parents. The impact of her work is visible in the positive school ethos and improvements to pupils' personal development. However, she has been unable to improve pupils' achievement or make a significant impact on teaching and learning, because the problems are so severe and she has not had enough time to bring about lasting change. She has made a successful key appointment in an additional deputy head, who contributes good support and has secured improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where provision is now satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are inadequate because too much of it fails to accelerate pupils' learning, so that they make too little progress. Lessons often do not interest or stimulate pupils sufficiently, and questioning does not challenge them to develop ideas. While there is some good teaching that engages and motivates pupils well, there is not enough of it to make a difference to progress overall. Assessment is not helped by insecure data, so that it is not clear how well pupils are doing, or who is falling behind. Marking does not consistently show pupils how they can improve their work. Expectations of what pupils can do and achieve are low. Planning does not take sufficient account of pupils' abilities. Pupils say that they often find work too easy. The curriculum has improved in some aspects this term, but is still inadequate because it

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does not meet pupils' interests or aspirations. Pupils show no great enthusiasm to come to school. A significant number of pupils are persistently absent, missing the equivalent of at least one day a week each, or eight school weeks over the year. Pupils' prolonged absence from school is another reason why they achieve well below their capabilities.

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe, for example, they undertake cycling proficiency. They know about keeping healthy and grow their own vegetables to sell. The school council is giving pupils more of a voice this term, and pupils contribute to the school as buddies and as house captains. They raise money for a range of charities so, as one of them commented, 'we can help people all over the world'. The school provides a satisfactory level of care. The 'well-being' unit works effectively with the most vulnerable pupils and their families. Even so, the overall provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is inadequate because their progress is not tracked effectively and their needs are not fully met. This results in them making inadequate progress.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate, because in key areas there has been no improvement. Essential systems, such as those used to track pupils' progress, fail to have any impact because they are unwieldy and too difficult to access. The effectiveness with which leaders embed ambition and drive improvement varies considerably. Self-evaluation in the past has been based on too optimistic a picture of the school's work, but under new leadership arrangements this is becoming more realistic. Governance is inadequate. The governing body has not supported or monitored the work of the school, nor challenged the decisions of the leaders with the rigour necessary to move the school forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to at least the national average by:
 - increasing significantly the rates of progress pupils make
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to write across subjects and at length
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in a range of different contexts.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - using assessment data more effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning
 - making lessons more stimulating, so that they capture and develop pupils' interests
 - improving teachers' skills in using questions to challenge pupils and help them develop their ideas
 - establishing stronger links between different areas of learning
 - using marking to show pupils how to improve their work.
- Increase attendance to at least the national average by:
 - taking more account of pupils' views in providing a curriculum that interests

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and engages them and makes them want to come to school

- by using the full range of legal and other processes to bring about very rapid improvement.

■ Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:

- - monitoring the performance of groups of pupils and individuals more closely and accurately to ensure that they all achieve as well as they can
- developing further a sense of common purpose amongst senior leaders so that all have clearly understood areas of responsibility and are held strongly to account.
- working with the local authority to ensure that any impediments to good governance are quickly removed.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils join the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those usually found. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but still enter Year 1 well below national expectations. By the time they leave Year 6, standards are significantly below average. Less than a third of pupils attained the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics in 2009. Pupils' attainment has been low for some years and remains so with less than half of the current Year 6 predicted to attain Level 4 in English.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory, although staff have to work extremely hard to engage them, and if the pace of the lesson flags some pupils quickly become restless. In more successful lessons learning proceeds briskly, for example, when pupils recited a verse of poetry together or acted out a story. Often the work is not matched precisely to meet pupils' needs and they easily give up or do not try. One pupil said, 'Sometimes if you don't know something you just sit there.' Pupils cite low-level tasks as what they enjoy most about learning, when they play games or just have to colour in pictures. Groups work compliantly with adults, particularly those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but often expectations of what they can do and achieve are too low, and adults are too easily satisfied with substandard work. Pupils eligible for free school meals often fall behind in their learning, and more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to fulfil their potential.

Pupils generally say they feel safe at school, although they refer to bullying in the past. They think things have improved this term. Many pupils walk to school and take regular exercise, although there is a fairly limited range of sports clubs and participation is not high. They make healthy choices at the school's Fair Trade snack bar. The school council have come up with ideas to improve the grounds for pupils and feel their views are taken into account. Pupils support their community through close links with the church and environmental projects, such as planting trees in a local park. They gain some awareness of the world of work through 'careers week' when they find out about different occupations and universities, but they are not adequately prepared for

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secondary school because their basic skills are so low by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils get on reasonably well with each other in class and this term pupils have become more aware of the different cultures and traditions of their classmates, such as those who come from Poland and Lithuania. They are now learning French, and displays around the school reflect the varying cultural traditions found in the United Kingdom today. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now satisfactory, as a result of measures taken by the new headteacher to improve the learning environment and the ethos of the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
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	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Not all teachers are confident in using data to help them assess how well pupils are doing. They have limited access to data, and much of it is inaccurate. This means they are unclear about how pupils are performing and how much progress, if any, they have made. Assessments in lessons are not precise enough so tasks are often not matched appropriately to suit pupils' levels of skill and ability. Too often set tasks are undemanding with too little expected from pupils. Consequently, pupils do not make the

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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progress they should and are easily distracted from their work. End of lesson summaries are not used effectively to assess what pupils have learnt. Opportunities are missed to extend learning through careful questioning. Inspectors saw occasional examples of good teaching, when imaginative activities captured pupils' attention.

The curriculum is insufficiently creative or relevant to pupils and makes little impact on their learning or achievement. Special events such as 'circus week', or making use of visiting authors and artists, help to enrich the curriculum and contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school and personal development. However, these are rare delicacies in an otherwise uninspiring diet. There are too few links across subjects to bring learning alive, so pupils do not use the skills they have in a range of different contexts, for example, they have little opportunity to write at length. Pastoral care is satisfactory, with good elements in the work of the learning mentor and family support worker who help run the 'well-being' unit. They are successful in helping the school's most vulnerable pupils and their families cope with the many challenges they face. A range of measures to promote attendance have not had lasting impact.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

A parent wrote, 'The school is now better than it was.' This statement is true, because of the hard work of the headteacher and the additional deputy headteacher in tackling many of the entrenched problems. More needs to be done. The school is still providing an unacceptable standard of education because it has been unable to make inroads into raising attainment from extremely low levels, and accelerating achievement.

Self-evaluation is now accurate, and recognises the seriousness of the school's situation. However, leaders are still working with a former improvement plan created jointly with the local authority, that does not prioritise school improvement actions well enough.

Regular monitoring has been introduced. Staff are given advice on areas for improvement, and these are being followed up through monitoring. They are also being held accountable for the performance of their pupils. All these measures are relatively recent and have yet to make an impact on the overall quality of teaching and learning.

The senior leadership team are not united in articulating their vision and driving forward school improvement. There are differences in how the vision is interpreted and about how improvement can be brought about. This is compounded by the weakness of the governing body, whose apathy and unwillingness to challenge has contributed to the

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school's current steep decline. Governors have not done any of their own monitoring, and have been satisfied to accept whatever information they have been given without question. The school's impact in promoting equality is inadequate because significant groups of pupils underachieve. When it occurs, discrimination is tackled satisfactorily. The school is working constructively with the community to help to reduce racial tensions. All safeguarding measures are in place and requirements met, so that provision for pupils' safety and well-being is satisfactory. The school knows its community well, and works hard to engage with it successfully. The new headteacher has made significant progress in this respect. Links to help pupils understand the national and global dimensions of community cohesion are less well established.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
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	4
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills are especially low in language and personal development when they join the Nursery. The satisfactory provision enables them to make adequate progress in a safe and caring environment. Their behaviour is satisfactory and they are beginning to learn how to consider one another's feelings. Children have an awareness of how to stay safe, for example, they routinely wash their hands before eating. In the Reception classes children have to be reminded on occasions to listen, sit still and line up quietly. The learning environment is inviting and stimulating, with good use of resources to stimulate interest and help foster an enjoyment of learning. Staff plan a balanced range of activities that include child-initiated and adult-led tasks both inside and outside the classroom. The outdoor areas are secure and frequently used, although more could be done to promote all six areas of learning. Assessment is regular, but not enough is done

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to track children's progress from their starting points. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory and conducted by the headteacher and deputy head while awaiting a newly appointed consultant to take up post. Enthusiastic and committed staff are building strong links with parents. There is a common sense of purpose.

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

Only a very small minority of parents returned questionnaires. Those parents and carers who did complete the questionnaire generally support the work of the school. Some of them have issues with what they perceive to be favourable treatment given to certain groups of pupils in the school, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. They believe that too much support is given to these pupils at the expense of others. Inspection findings did not support parents' views that some groups were treated more favourably than others.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Orchards 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 422 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	43	14	47	3	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	27	21	70	0	0	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	47	14	47	2	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	33	19	63	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	43	15	50	2	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	30	19	63	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	31	18	62	2	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)	7	23	20	67	2	7	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	24	21	72	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	17	19	63	4	13	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	14	22	76	2	7	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	5	17	23	77	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	40	15	50	1	3	2	7

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Orchards Church of England Primary School, Wisbech, PE13 3NP

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school. Here are some of the best things that inspectors found:

- your new headteacher has made many good changes that are helping your school to become a happier place
- your school has some lovely displays on the walls and is a colourful and attractive place to work in
- behaviour has improved this term and you are all getting on fine together
- you know about keeping safe and staying healthy and often walk to school, reducing your carbon footprint
- your school council is speaking up, and you are helping around school and in your local community
- you enjoy the special days that the school runs to make work more interesting
- your school makes sure that you are cared for, especially if you have lots of worries

Although there are some positive things happening in your school we also found out that you are not doing as well as you should, especially in English and mathematics. Too many of you miss too much school, so we want everybody to work extremely hard to make sure you come every day.

The inspectors agreed that your school needs 'special measures' because it does not give you a satisfactory education. This means that other inspectors will come and check on the progress that your school is making at regular intervals. We have asked your teachers to make sure you catch up quickly. We have asked them to check really carefully how well you are doing and to let you know how you can improve. We are sure they would value hearing your views about your progress. We have asked the school's leaders to check on your progress to make sure you are doing your best. Finally, we want governors to play a full role in supporting and developing your school.

Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

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