

# Mears Ashby Church of England Endowed School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122026
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359150
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carol Worthington

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	73
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tobin James
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amanda Molcher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	North Street Mears Ashby Northampton
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 810063
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who observed eight lessons; all three full-time and one of the part-time class teachers were seen at least once. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, and groups of parents and pupils. Many pupils were informally spoken to. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at records of assessments of pupils' attainment, tracking of their progress and samples of their work in books. All safeguarding documents were scrutinised. Inspectors analysed 41 parents' and carers' questionnaire returns, together with those completed by all staff and all Key Stage 2 pupils.

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

- The degree to which pupils enjoy their education, understand its purpose and know how well they are doing.
- How effectively the widening of the leadership team has resulted in a shared vision for improvement and improved quality of learning for all pupils.
- How well the school promotes wider community cohesion and prepares its pupils for life in multicultural Britain.

## Information about the school

This smaller-than-average school is in a rural setting, but a significant number of its pupils come from a nearby town. Virtually all pupils are of White British origin, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. All speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools. These all have specific learning difficulties or a disability, and some have behavioural problems also. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. There are three classes, all having mixed age groups: Years 4, 5 and 6; Years 2 and 3; and Reception with Year 1.

**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

Mears Ashby School has made good improvement since its previous inspection and now provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Academic standards shown by pupils' performance in national tests in English, mathematics and science are above average in both Key Stages 1 and 2. This is reflected in work seen in the school. Pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills develop well throughout the school and they use computers effectively in most areas of the curriculum. In this small school, pupils are well known to all staff, and their individual progress is meticulously tracked, with the result that virtually all make at least the progress expected of them, and many exceed it. All groups of pupils achieve well. The school has a greater than average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities and provides well for their needs; all achieve well and the majority attain average or above average academic standards.

The school fulfils its aims to produce well-informed and confident young citizens, prepared to take their place in the modern world. Their personal development is much enhanced by the excellent ways in which all pupils are enabled to take up responsible posts and have a voice in their own learning through their class councils. The school's strong Christian ethos is apparent in all aspects of school life, particularly in the high quality of pastoral care shown by all adults for the children in their care. In turn, children learn to care for each other and their environment. Older ones look after younger ones and operate a 'Worry Club' for all ages. Pupils feel safe and say they always have someone to talk to if they feel worried. Behaviour is good and older children say that they do not remember any bullying in their time at school.

Teaching and learning are good overall; the headteacher demonstrates particularly excellent practice. Pupils were keen to say how much they enjoy their lessons because of the way their teachers find interesting ways to help them learn. The emphasis on 'active learning' has motivated many boys, who were previously identified as underachieving, to make much better progress. Drama is used very well by teachers, for example to bring periods of history to life and enable both boys and girls to produce imaginative written work. Assessment is generally used well to determine the next steps for learning, and pupils are becoming more widely involved in assessing their own learning, using individual and group targets effectively. School leaders have worked hard to improve teaching since the previous inspection, but there are still some occasions where learning is only satisfactory because assessment is not precise enough to enable activities to challenge the full range of age and ability in classes containing two or more year groups.

There have been good improvements in the quality of leadership and management since

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the previous inspection. All members of staff are effective in leadership roles, and there is shared ambition for success and further improvement. The accurate school self-evaluation is thorough and results in accurate priorities for development which have led to good improvements in pupils' achievement and progress. Challenging targets are set and invariably met or exceeded. The governing body is chaired well and holds the school effectively to account for its standards, increasingly through first hand observations, which enables it to play an informed role in school self-evaluation. Because of the good all-round improvement since the previous inspection, the school is now in a good position to make further improvements.

The school is a highly cohesive community where everyone is valued and their talents recognised. It is well regarded and makes a good contribution to its local community in the village, parish and nearby town where many of its pupils live. Parents value the school's strong partnership with them. It has some links further afield, for example with an urban school that has a multicultural population. Other links are starting with schools in Africa and India, but the school recognises that pupils do not yet have enough first-hand contact with people from ethnic minorities in Britain.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that the large majority is at least good, by:
  - planning tasks that are consistently challenging for pupils of all ages and abilities in mixed-age classes
  - building on the headteacher's excellent practice as an example of how to use ongoing assessment during lessons to move on the learning of individuals still further.
- Find ways for pupils to have greater first-hand experience of the wide range of cultures present in modern Britain.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Pupils enter the school with early skills and knowledge which vary from year to year because of small numbers and a wide spread of ability, but are broadly at the levels expected. All children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this progress is maintained by individual pupils throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Year 2 pupils enthusiastically took on the roles of Victorian children and wrote interesting accounts of their assumed families which the whole class knowledgeably assessed against their targets. The standard of written work produced was above average. Year 6 pupils enjoyed learning about multiplication and division of decimals by role play, involving a pupil holding a football to represent the decimal point. Higher ability pupils gain from being in mixed-age classes, as they can be put into groups with older children doing more advanced work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported by well-qualified teaching assistants and work is well matched to their needs in class and in focused withdrawal lessons.

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Pupils are very proud of, and committed to, their school community. They enthusiastically take part in schemes to improve the school and village environment, particularly in preserving native wildlife. Every pupil takes on some responsibility and all have a strong voice in making decisions relating to their education and well-being. Activities such as choosing the 'June Rose' and 'Harvest Tea' are well attended by the local community. Pupils know how to live healthy lives by eating well and being active. Attendance remains above average, as it was at the previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, but although pupils learn in religious education about the cultures of those practising different religions, they do not get extensive first-hand experience of the variety of cultures in modern Britain.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

There is some excellent teaching practice in the school. For example, near the end of a very well planned lesson where pupils had produced some high quality writing about a fantastic animated dragon, they were further challenged to think about a fantasy event at a swimming pool, so they went away, excitedly planning their next day's writing task.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Teachers have a good knowledge of the learning needs of their pupils and usually plan activities which motivate them all to make good progress. Although pupils enjoy most activities and understand their purpose, in satisfactory lessons some pupils lose interest because the planned work is not challenging enough for them. Marking is done regularly, praising success and indicating how pupils can make progress against their targets.

The curriculum is well planned to make sure that all requirements are met in the context of the school's varying numbers in all years and the need to have two or three different years in each class. Good provision is made for literacy and numeracy through projects which link the learning in different subjects. The curriculum is enhanced by a very wide variety of clubs and activities for such a small school, including film, cooking, class eco and safety teams. Partnerships with other schools enhance provision, particularly in sport and music.

The school has well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils which result in their good personal development and well-being. There is good support for pupils and their families who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances. The school works well with outside agencies to help these children to overcome barriers to their learning. Good advice is given to pupils and families when they enter or leave school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher leads the school well and communicates her high expectations to all staff. Leadership has been effectively distributed to other members of staff since the previous inspection, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have resulted in good improvement. Accurate school self-evaluation results in good priorities for improvement. Challenging targets are set and regularly met and often exceeded. The effectiveness of the governing body is good. It ensures that all statutory requirements are met and is influential in deciding priorities for school improvement. It has effective methods for consulting parents.

The school's procedures for safeguarding are good. It adopts recommended good practice and all staff are well trained in child protection issues. There are well developed quality assurance and risk assessment procedures. Pupils and parents are very well aware of safety procedures and why they are in place. The school's very effective and comprehensive systems for tracking pupils' progress identify those who are

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underachieving. In the recent past, the focus has been on both boys and girls, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and gifted and talented pupils, for a short time. As a result of interventions, all these groups of pupils made better progress and their attainment improved. Appropriate funding ensures that all children have the opportunity to take part in all activities, including trips and residential visits.

The school has analysed its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context and used this to promote community cohesion strongly within the school and in its outreach into the local village and parish communities. It also engages with communities further afield and has effective plans to do more on a global scale. All pupils, whatever their background, noticeably get on well together.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Consistently good teaching by all adults who work with the children ensures that they make good progress, regardless of their different starting points, and thoroughly enjoy learning.

Children had only been in the setting for less than two weeks, half-days only, at the time of the inspection. They were already confident and happy in this secure and welcoming environment. They were becoming familiar with the class routines and took very little time to settle attentively on the carpet. Their good social skills enabled them to initiate learning activities when playing amicably in small groups together, for example in the home corner. They enjoyed the story of 'Oliver's Fruit' and were then able to sort out play fruit from other foods; many knew the names of specific fruit.



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The curriculum is planned well to include activities across all the areas of learning. The learning environment indoors is well equipped, but it is more limited outdoors. Although attractive and welcoming, there is currently little opportunity for free flow use of activities linked to specific learning objectives or problem solving.

Good leadership ensures planning is thorough and assessment is used effectively to match adult-led activities to the range of children's abilities. The safety and care of all children has a very high profile. Good relationships with parents and carers extend learning into children's homes.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

There was a higher than usual return of completed questionnaires from parents and carers, who expressed overwhelmingly positive views about the school. Many wrote praising the school for its values and the quality of education. Typical comments included: 'cannot praise the staff highly enough, they are always available to discuss children's progress', 'the school prepares children for citizenship and to take a role in society', 'they are well-mannered and well thought of in the local community', and 'I would recommend this school to anyone'.

A very few individual concerns were expressed, mainly about provision for pupils with behaviour problems being given extra 'good behaviour' stickers and allowed into the playground with companions for 'blue sky' time. Inspectors found that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the very few with behaviour problems, are well supported and only removed from class for one-to-one tuition and very occasionally for behaviour reasons. Staff are very careful to avoid other children's learning being affected. Pupils themselves show very caring attitudes to each other and report that their learning is not disrupted.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mears Ashby Church of England Endowed 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	80	8	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	88	5	12	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	51	18	44	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	56	15	37	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	68	12	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	66	14	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	73	11	27	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)	25	61	13	32	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	61	15	37	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	49	17	41	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	51	18	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	78	6	15	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	78	8	20	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mears Ashby Church of England Endowed School, Northampton, NN6 0DW

Thank you very much for being so helpful to my colleague and me during our visit. It was good to see you enjoying your work and play. I agree with you that yours is a good school, and here are some of the reasons.

Your headteacher and governing body run the school well. Teaching is good so you enjoy your lessons and work hard. You do well, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, which helps you succeed in other subjects. This and your good behaviour and attitudes to learning, prepares you well for secondary school. You are proud of your school and you all contribute such a lot to make it such a happy, warm and friendly place.

All the adults take good care of you and in turn, you take care of those younger than yourselves at play and lunchtimes. You can always talk to someone, including a member of the 'Worry Club' if you have problems. You learn how to keep yourself safe and have definite opinions about safety on the school site and many other aspects of your education, which you express through your class councils.

You have good links with the local community and church. Your contributions to activities such as 'harvest tea' are very much appreciated.

All the adults in your school want it to be even better. To make this happen I have asked them to do the following things.

Make sure you have work in all lessons which makes you think and challenges you to do well.

Find ways of giving you more contact with people from a wider range of different cultures who live in Britain.

You can help by always doing your best to succeed, even with work which might seem too hard at first!

Yours sincerely

Carol Worthington

Lead inspector

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