



Stockcross Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110017
Local Authority West Berkshire
Inspection number 278345
Inspection date 5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Judith Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chapel Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Stockcross
Age range of pupils	4-11		Newbury RG20 8LD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01488 608356
Number on roll (school)	86	Fax number	01488 657971
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr John Hayward
		Headteacher	Mr Nathan Hunt
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small rural village school is part of a federation of local schools. It has strong links with the church. Most pupils come from advantaged households and very few are eligible for free school meals. Attainment on entry to the school is above average and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The school holds the 'Active Mark' for sports and has recently renewed its 'Investors in People' status. It is the lead school in a network of Newbury town schools that are seeking to improve mathematics. There have been several recent staff changes in teaching and support staff and the Governing Body.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave. This is the result of mostly good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching.

The good provision for Reception children gives the children a flying start to their education and they make rapid progress. This continues throughout the infants and pupils attain well above average standards by the end of Year 2.

In recent years, low expectations of their achievements led to a dip in pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4. Outstanding teaching and high quality learning in Years 5 and 6 enable pupils to, once again, make the rapid progress they are capable of and their standards and achievement are outstanding.

The school cares for its pupils well. Pupils feel safe, are given plenty of responsibility for their learning and know their targets for improvement. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The School Council and House Captains have a good impact on the life of the school. The School Council instigated a non uniform day with the money going to 'Save the Children'. It was responsible for the colour scheme in the toilets. Almost all pupils enjoy school and work hard. Some understandably lack concentration when they do not have enough to do.

Teaching is good. All teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with the pupils. The pupils' outstanding achievements are clear evidence of teachers' expertise and commitment to their classes. Teachers support one another very well, and where there is some lack of expertise the headteacher and assistant headteacher are providing good support. The best teachers give pupils very good guidance when they mark work, enabling them to make rapid improvement. While the planning for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is generally very good, preparing pupils well for their future lives, there are limited links between subjects, restricting opportunities for pupils to apply their skills. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and older pupils make good use of computers to produce their monthly publications.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has responded swiftly and decisively to any weaknesses. A dip in writing standards in the infants has been addressed very effectively and he is committed to ensuring that teaching is good throughout the school. The senior management team and the governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. While the majority of parents are pleased with the way the school is run, a minority have expressed the view that their concerns have not been responded to effectively or sensitively. This is an aspect of the leadership that needs to be improved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils.

- Provide more links between subjects to enable pupils to use their skills across the curriculum.
- Improve the way changes in routines and parents' concerns are dealt with.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils come from families who give them plenty of support at home and children start school with well-established basic skills and good personal development. They make good progress, attaining well above average standards by Year 2 and high standards by the time they leave the school, meeting their challenging targets.

Children and pupils in the youngest class are given tasks that are fun and closely matched to their needs. They have confidence in their learning and are proud of their achievements. Pupils in Year 1 with the Reception children and those in the class with Year 2 pupils are already working within the first levels of the National Curriculum. The majority of pupils in Year 2 are on track to attain the higher Level 3 by the end of the infants. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and the abler pupils, have made slower progress in Years 3 and 4. The school has identified this and further support is now enabling these pupils to make better progress. Outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 5 ensures all pupils make rapid progress. Overall achievement is high and in 2006 was amongst the top five percent of all primary schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. The youngest children are already confident and work very well together. Pupils in the infants are eager to discuss their learning with each other and, as one pupil said, 'We help each other get better'. There is a strong work ethic amongst pupils throughout the school. These are pupils who delight in challenge. Pupils in the oldest class were surprised that I should even have to ask them if they work hard and answered 'Of course' with raised eyebrows. Attendance is good.

The House Captains have the responsibility of promoting good behaviour and take their pastoral role very seriously and help maintain positive relationships. One pupil considered the relaxing of uniform rules to allow girls to wear trousers to be the School Council's greatest achievement! Pupils have a good understanding of the Christian faith and respect the differences amongst major world faiths. Almost all pupils join in the additional physical activities and know that exercise keeps them healthy and that sports generate 'team spirit'. Pupils enjoy their lessons about other cultures and are looking forward to the 'Aztec Day'. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and the choir sings to senior citizens. Pupils' responsibilities, as well as their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, prepare them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching and learning are good. The teaching of the youngest children is very effective because the teacher and teaching assistant build on the children's already good knowledge and skills, challenging them through enjoyable activities. These high expectations continue in the next class where basic skills are taught thoroughly. Pupils know that all their work has to be 'best work' and they take great pride in producing it. In both classes, the very good relationships between the adults and their pupils generate a very good climate for learning.

These very good relationships continue into Year 3 and 4 and interesting work is planned for the pupils. However, these tasks are not sufficiently adapted to give individual pupils the challenge or support they need and the rate of learning slows. This is rapidly addressed in the oldest class. Here there are very high expectations of pupils' abilities and work ethic. Lessons generate interest and enthusiasm and careful marking gives pupils very clear guidance about how to improve their work. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and dedication and give of their best.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum and weaknesses in the provision for ICT at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. There is a good curriculum for English, mathematics and science enabling pupils to make good progress. The planning for other subjects meets government guidelines. Several subjects are under review and the school has not yet established ways to evaluate how well pupils develop their skills in these. Links between subjects are informal and do not enable pupils to make the most of their outstanding basic skills across the curriculum.

The school provides a good range of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning. Year 6 pupils benefit from study units that follow through to their new schools. Pupils have opportunities to play musical instruments. When asked what is best about the curriculum, several pupils said 'We have plenty of sport', while others were looking forward to their trip to Wales with other schools in the federation.

The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in school. There are good procedures for dealing with accidents and sick pupils and the school carries out all mandatory checks to ensure pupils' safety. Child protection procedures are rigorous. Pupils with specific needs are supported well and the school makes good use of outside agencies such as speech therapists. The Christian ethos of the school provides good guidance for pupils' personal development

and they are encouraged to care for each other and those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their achievements, which generates high self-esteem.

Pupils have targets for improving their English and mathematics and most teachers give them clear guidance to help them improve. This is not always so in subjects other than English and mathematics and the school is seeking to establish more consistency. Pupils with learning difficulties or statements of special needs receive good support so they make good progress towards their individual targets. Parents' concerns about the welfare of their children are not perceived to be acted upon sufficiently and more needs to be done to work with parents so that they are assured that their children are well cared for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development and self-evaluation is used effectively. He and the governors have appointed a very effective assistant headteacher and a well-qualified leader for the Infants. This strong team has been instrumental in raising standards even further and beginning to improve the curriculum planning. There is a good capacity for further improvements. The school sets, and achieves, very challenging targets in English, mathematics and science. Although plans for the future clearly reflect the school's needs, they are not prioritised, resulting in a heavy workload for this small staff.

The headteacher is committed to ensuring the best care for the pupils. The changes in school routines and guidance for staff to achieve this end have been effective. However, sometimes they have not been explained as well as they should be, resulting in some concerns amongst non-teaching staff and parents. Governance is strong. Governors are proud of the school, knowledgeable about its strengths and are rigorous in seeking the best for the pupils. They support the headteacher very well.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for your friendliness and help during my visit to your school. I was very impressed with your behaviour and hard work. A special thanks to the House Captains and School Council who gave up their lunchtime to talk to me. You showed me how responsible you are and the impact you make on the life of the school.

You told me that you have a good school. I agree with you. Your good teachers and your hard work ensure that you leave the school with high standards and achieve extremely well. You are well cared for. I am very pleased that almost all of you make the most of all the sports provided for you. You all know how to keep healthy.

There are some things I have asked your teachers to do to help you make the most of your time in school. While most of your teachers make sure that you have plenty of the challenge you relish I want the school to help all teachers do so. You are very good at English and mathematics and are competent ICT users. You need more opportunities to use these skills in other subjects. This will make what you learn even more interesting. Your school is led and managed well although some of your parents would like to know how the school acts upon their concerns and suggestions. I have asked your headteacher to make sure that people know how he is acting to improve things.

I hope you enjoyed your Aztec Day and that the Nativity is a great success. Have a very Merry Christmas. You have worked hard and deserve it.

Best wishes

Judy Dawson, Inspector