

Walsh Memorial CofE Controlled Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125135
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	293206
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Dodd
Headteacher	Mrs S Cawson
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	Ash Street Ash Aldershot GU12 6LT
Telephone number	01252 321426
Fax number	01252 336229

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management, and some aspects of personal development, well-being, care, guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, documents and scrutiny of pupils' work. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with parents, children, and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average infant school has below the average number of pupils entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those having English as an additional language is well below the expected levels. The locality has one of the largest housed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations in the country. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well below average, as are the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school is an Investors in People organisation, is recognised nationally as an Eco School, and has the Healthy School Award. The current headteacher joined the school this academic year.

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, with some outstanding features. A parent summed up the feelings of others when writing, 'My child enjoys school. Expectations, both behaviourally and academically, are high and she has become independent, mature and sociable.' The headteacher has given an extremely clear direction to the school, and has established a very good team ethos. Together, staff ensure that the pupils thrive academically, and that their other social and personal needs are met well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education is outstanding. Pupils say that their opinions are welcomed, and that there is mutual respect. In this church school, there are very good opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues of concern. The pupils feel secure and able to make their own decisions. Consequently, they are eager to get involved, answer questions very politely and listen with respect to the views of others. Teaching and learning are good, and pupils respond well to the varied activities on offer. They remain on task when working in groups and on their own, thereby demonstrating that they are good, independent learners. Teachers, in sessions at the end of lessons, do not always establish clearly enough what pupils have and have not learnt. Consequently, this information is not available for the planning of the next steps in the pupils' learning.

Pupils achieve well. On entry to Year 1, the pupils have generally met their early learning goals in areas such as social and personal development. However, in other areas, such as writing, they are clearly below the expected levels for their age. A whole-school focus on developing the writing skills of pupils, particularly boys, is having a positive impact on standards. In the 2007 national assessments for seven year olds, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well above average. In the current Year 2, standards are above average and pupils are achieving well.

Pupils' good personal development contributes to the positive academic progress they make. Behaviour is good. The pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school is evident in their comments, and in the excitement of children in Reception, when role-play and outdoor activities are offered to them. The number of bicycles and scooters used to come to school, along with the pupils' enthusiasm for physical activity at break times, reflects their secure understanding of how to stay healthy. The pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community, whether acting as Eco councillors, or linking with the church and the local primary school. In particular, the pupils gain a very secure knowledge of community issues. They discuss litter problems in the locality, and learn of international, charity issues, when financing an orchard for an African school. Attendance is average. The school has recognised the need to improve this through various, good strategies. For example, one message to parents is that 80% attendance represents a day off each school week. Through good basic skill levels, the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils respond well to the varied activities they are offered, including the theme weeks such as the technology week. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe because the curriculum includes road, water, rail and personal safety. Other needs of pupils are met well through the well-organised personal, social and health education programme; pupils say they enjoy the opportunities to 'talk things over'. Curriculum planning, however, does not give sufficient guidance to teachers about possible work for pupils of different abilities, especially

work for pupils of higher ability. This results in inconsistencies in the extent to which such approaches are used in lessons to challenge pupils.

The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. Their varied needs and those of their families, including those from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage, are extremely well met. The school visits many of the pre-school settings to establish links with parents, and to assess individual needs. Consequently, the adults in the school know the pupils very well. Very good strategies, including the valued 'Parent Forums' contribute to effective links with parents. However, the overall care, guidance and support for pupils are good because academic guidance and support require further development, to ensure that pupils are always challenged at the right level.

Leadership and management, at all levels, are good, and make a very positive contribution to pupils' academic, personal and social development. Effective teamwork, particularly between the headteacher and the assistant headteacher, has contributed very well to the smooth running of the school. Monitoring is effective and leads to accurate evaluation and development planning. For example, the identification of the need to develop phonics across the school has had a positive impact on writing and reading standards. The good, detailed school development plan reflects the outstandingly clear direction envisaged for the school. There is a need for some subject action plans to reflect the aims of the whole-school development plan. Governors give good support, and they have overseen a school that is not complacent. It has established an outstanding array of links with organisations outside the school for the benefit of pupils. Not least are the links with local schools. These have helped to deliver additional outstanding support for pupils with special educational needs, and good support for boys' writing. There is a good capacity to improve the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

One new parent wrote of the good Foundation Stage, 'The school have been very supportive, and are aware of the children's individuality.' Good, early assessment helps ensure that the children's needs are identified, and consequently they settle quickly. They achieve well because relationships are very positive, the children are keen to learn, and there is consistently good teaching. The current children entered Reception with skills and knowledge well below those expected of their age in calculation, reading and creative development. In response, the good curriculum has been further adapted. For example, there are more opportunities for pupils to use their imaginations through role-play scenarios. Curriculum planning, however, does not sufficiently focus on identifying the learning needs of pupils of different abilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all curriculum plans clearly show opportunities where work can be set for pupils of different abilities, especially those of higher ability.
- Ensure that teachers assess, in the end of lesson sessions, what pupils have and have not learnt, and that they use this information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

3 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walsh Memorial CofE Controlled Infant School, Aldershot, GU12 6LT

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school. I was very interested in what you had to say, and was very pleased that you told me how much you enjoy school. You also told me, and I agree, that it is a good school. I feel that it has some outstanding features, which means that it does some things very well indeed.

Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. In other words, you think seriously about things, and get along so well together. You also know right from wrong, and you are prepared to say so! You told me that the adults value your views, and that you are encouraged to give your opinions. I also judge that your contribution to the community is outstanding. I liked very much the work of your Eco-council. Also, keep up the good charity fundraising. Well done!

The standards you reach in reading, writing and mathematics are above what is normal in many other schools. You behave very well, and during lessons, you work hard and do your best. You progress well because you have positive attitudes and receive good teaching. I have asked that all teachers make use of the end of lessons to see what you have learnt. They can then use this information to challenge you in future lessons. You can help by telling your teacher if you find the work too easy or too hard. You told me that you enjoy the various exciting things you have to do in lessons. You were obviously enjoying working on computers when I visited. I, as well as the other adults in the hall, could see how much effort you put into your nativity play. I have asked the school to make sure that when they plan your work, it matches your ability. For example, if you are a fast learner in science, then you get work that really challenges you.

You and your parents told me, and I could see, how very well the school cares for you. This is because the adults want the best for you, and are always looking to improve things. For example, your headteacher and her staff make use of a very wide range of people outside the school to help you and your families.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector