

Naphill and Walters Ash School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110393
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310284
Inspection date	6 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judy Whitehouse
Headteacher	Mr Tim McLoughlin
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Kilnwood Walters Ash High Wycombe HP14 4UL
Telephone number	01494 562813
Fax number	01494 565806

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Introduction

An Additional Inspector carried out the inspection. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- what does the school's tracking data show current progress and standards to be
- how good is the curriculum - particularly in promoting good progress and improved standards of literacy in Key Stage 1
- how effective are the systems now in place to provide academic guidance for pupils.

The inspector gathered evidence from performance data, observations of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, representatives of the governing body, and some members of 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

Naphill and Walters Ash is much larger than most primary schools. There is a large annual turnover of pupils because many are the children of RAF personnel. The pupils are taught in single-age classes, with two classes for each year group throughout the school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average. The specific needs of these pupils are wide-ranging, and include behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, limited skills in speech language and communication, and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The school has the Activemark accreditation for its commitment to promoting physical exercise and school sport, the Artsmark silver award, and has achieved the national Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Naphill and Walters Ash is a good school. Its pupils achieve well and make good progress both academically and in their personal development. This occurs because teaching is generally good, and the pupils benefit from the wide range of activities that enrich the curriculum and the good quality care and guidance provided for them. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, the pupils consistently attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards this year are on course to be as high as in previous years. However, they are not as high as they should be in Key Stage 1, where they are average overall. The school is focusing strongly on addressing a dip in standards that has occurred over the past two years, particularly in reading and writing. This resulted from the lack of systematic teaching of how spoken sounds relate to written words (phonics) and the lack of opportunities for pupils to write at length. This situation was compounded by the higher than average turnover of pupils in Years 1 and 2 and specific weaknesses in their attainment. The school has introduced a new method of teaching phonics, and the curriculum has been adjusted to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise the skills learned. However, the school recognises that not enough has been done to improve reading resources, or to intensify the focus on writing by developing pupils' skills in writing at length. There is a clear plan of action, and the headteacher and governors are closely monitoring the progress made.

One of the school's many strengths is the good climate for learning in all classes. This results from the good relationships within the school community, and pupils' clear enjoyment of learning. The excellent attendance rates are testimony to pupils' outstandingly positive attitudes towards their education. 'I really like my lessons because the teachers make learning fun' was one of the many appreciative comments made by the pupils. A large majority of parents have similarly positive views. One summarised these well when writing, 'This school provides a safe, supportive learning environment' and another that, 'My children could not be happier.' The response from parents of children with LDD was more mixed, and reflects the variations in rates of progress of these pupils found during the inspection. On balance, however, the progress they make is good, and is most rapid towards the end of Key Stage 2 because of the good quality help provided.

Through their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong; consequently, behaviour is generally good. In closely controlled situations, such as lessons, it is often impeccable. The pupils appreciate the prompt and effective way in which instances of misbehaviour, such as bullying, are dealt with and say that this helps them to feel safe at school. Older pupils help in this by acting as 'anti-bullying' monitors in the playground. These, and other responsible tasks undertaken by pupils, such as membership of the school council, contribute to their good sense of citizenship. Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles, such as the importance of a good diet, is satisfactory. The school intends to focus more strongly on improving this in the coming terms as it works towards 'Healthy School' status.

Many of the strengths in teaching, clearly identified by the headteacher, were evident during the course of the inspection. For instance, teachers are good at providing activities that excite and interest their pupils and have high expectations of what they can achieve. A good example of this was observed in a Year 6 lesson in which pupils all took on character roles during a village meeting as they attempted to work out who had committed a crime. The pupils used note-taking skills well to inform their thinking, and their highly articulate responses to the teacher's questions added to the realism of the situation. However, the headteacher acknowledges that teaching

varies in quality, and work is underway to address inconsistencies, such as reducing the instances of over-long introductions to lessons or making better use of periodic interventions to help develop pupils' understanding.

A further factor contributing to the good progress made by pupils is the clear guidance they receive through teachers' marking of their work. In some instances, this is exemplary but, as in teaching, practice is variable. Consequently, pupils do not always benefit fully from the comments made about their work. For example, corrections are sometimes not completed. The systems for setting targets for pupils to achieve are very clear and well understood by the pupils. At present, these targets are limited to literacy and numeracy and do not include any focus on skills in science.

This school is constantly striving to raise standards, and bases its improvement plan securely on careful evaluations of its performance. These showed, for example, that teachers sometimes miss opportunities to make learning more enjoyable and relevant by giving opportunities for pupils to use the skills learned in one subject when working in another. The school is identifying potential links that could be made between subjects. However, in doing this, it has not focussed clearly enough on the skills to be assessed in subjects other than the core of English, mathematics and science.

There is good leadership. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is supported well by his deputy. The governors constantly monitor the effectiveness of the school and provide both support and challenge through their interest and involvement. There is a strong commitment to continuous development and generally robust systems to help ensure that this happens. Therefore, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children get a good start to their education in the Reception classes and, by the time they move into Year 1, standards are generally above average. Teaching reflects a secure understanding of how very young children learn. Teachers plan the activities well, and children have many opportunities to make choices and develop their social skills and confidence. The highly practical approach to learning, both indoors and out, effectively promotes all aspects of children's development. However, the impact of the work done to promote children's independent learning is sometimes reduced when adults over-direct it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of literacy in Key Stage 1 by improving reading resources and giving more opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Focus more closely on the skills to be assessed in non-core subjects when developing cross-curricular links.

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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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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	2
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

16 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Naphill and Walters Ash School, High Wycombe, HP14 4UL

Thank you for being so helpful when I came to your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed looking at your work and talking to some of you. I also really enjoyed your singing in assembly.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school. There is so much I like about your school that I cannot mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- Most of you make good progress. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you are better at English, mathematics and science than pupils in most other schools. You should be very proud of all of this.
- Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming, and your behaviour is usually good.
- You learn well because your lessons are often good and your teachers give you clear targets to achieve.
- Your teachers are good at planning lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.
- The people who help run your school do a good job in making sure that you get a good education, especially your headteacher and governors.

Even in a good school like yours there is always something that could be better, so I have suggested two things that I think will make a real difference.

- Your school wants to make sure that those of you in Years 1 and 2 do better in reading and writing. I agree that this is very important. I think that the plan that has been worked out is a good one, and I think it would work even better if you had some new reading books and more opportunities to practise your writing.
- Your teachers are working out ways to link different subjects together to help make your learning even more interesting. I think that this is a very good idea, and I would like your teachers to concentrate particularly on the skills that you need to learn when they are planning these links.

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector