

Marcham Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123155
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314518
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jeffrey White

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	124
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	22
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Ruth Atkins
Headteacher	Mrs Viv Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Morland Road Marcham Abingdon OX13 6PY
Telephone number	01865 391448
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is lower than average. Very few pupils take a free school meal. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark. A privately funded pre-school operates within the school building. The headteacher has been at the school for a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and is improving quickly from a recent decline in Key Stage 2 pupils' progress and standards. Currently, progress in lessons is good. It is gradually redressing the previous underachievement so that pupils' achievement is now satisfactory and standards are above average. Parents are positive about the school and praise the leadership. The headteacher, fully supported by governors, provides strong and determined leadership. Good leadership and management have ensured the school's improvement.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and contribute well to their progress. Their behaviour has improved and is good. They are very keen to learn and have very positive attitudes towards each other, for example, when working in pairs and groups. Pupils engage in a good range of sporting and fitness activities and know how to stay safe and healthy. They contribute positively to the local community, for instance, singing to the residents of the local day care centre or writing in the village newsletter. Pupils enjoy having a say and feel their views are valued by the headteacher and staff. The oldest pupils are confident and articulate. They have too few opportunities to take on responsibilities in the school.

Teaching and learning are good and none is unsatisfactory. All teachers promote pupils' personal development well. Lessons run smoothly and little time is wasted. The current curriculum is satisfactory. The school is poised to implement a revised curriculum designed to better promote the progression of skills. Pastoral care and support are good and enable all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, to play a full part in the life of the school. More rigorous tracking of pupils' achievement has improved the use of long-term targets for their learning. Teachers do not consistently use marking and short term targets to aid pupils' progress. Consequently pupils are not always sure what they need to do to improve. In the Reception class, observations of the children's learning are not used consistently to plan their activities in order to help them progress well.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Reception class with the skill levels expected for their age. The last two year groups in the Reception made good progress, especially in their personal and social development. They were well prepared for entry to Year 1. Temporary staff are now covering for staff absence in the Reception class and the overall provision is currently no more than satisfactory. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall but remains good in personal and social development. Most of the children behave well and have settled into routines reasonably quickly. They enjoy working with others and making independent choices, for example, when dressing up in the role-play area or playing a game on the computer. Children especially enjoy frequent opportunities to play outside and choose from a good range of activities. The staff promote the welfare of the children well. The children are interested in their daily learning of letter sounds and are making satisfactory progress. Recorded observations of the children's learning are not being used sufficiently to plan their work. Consequently they are not achieving as well as they might. Parents are made welcome and are provided with clear information on the activities the children undertake. The overall provision is led and managed satisfactorily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan children's work.

- Implement the school's revised curriculum in order to develop wider cross-curricular links and a clearer progression of skills.
- Use marking and short term targets more consistently to aid pupils' awareness of what they need to do to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. The long term staffing problems, which contributed to the decline in pupils' achievement and standards at the end of Key Stage 2, have now been resolved. Staffing in Key Stage 2 is now stable and teaching is good, so pupils make good progress in lessons that is gradually overcoming their previous underachievement. Achievement is also improving because of the more rigorous assessments of pupils' performance and the effective use of long term targets. Standards are above average at the end of both key stages. Writing has improved following the whole school's effort to raise standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with severe physical difficulties such as visual impairment, make consistently good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Links with the church are strong and an ethos of care and concern for others permeates the life of the school. This has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes. Their very good attendance is indicative of how much they enjoy school. The headteacher and staff value the pupils' views and act upon them where possible. For example, pupils' desire for a greater range of extra-curricular activities resulted in the introduction of additional after school clubs including origami and flamenco dancing. Pupils are developing effective measures to help resolve any conflicts between each other, as one child said, 'It's very important to say I'm sorry'. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility within the school, such as through involvement in the school council. Pupils' opportunities to initiate and organise fund raising activities and their good grounding in basic skills benefit their economic and social awareness. The oldest pupils in Key Stage 2 have fewer opportunities to use their initiative than is often seen elsewhere.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The resolution of long term staffing issues has led to a recent improvement in teaching and learning. Most lessons are effectively planned to meet the range of pupils' learning needs. Behaviour is managed well and pupils settle quickly to work. Provision for the most able pupils has improved and, where appropriate, includes extended work which would normally be undertaken by older pupils. Teachers use discussion with pupils well. They encourage pupils to share their opinions and to explain their thinking, for example when solving mathematical problems. Tracking of pupils' progress is improving and is helping to focus targets more sharply, although short term targets for individual pupils are not used consistently. Consequently, some

pupils are unsure of how to improve their work. Pupils' learning skills are improving well, and include working independently and in groups. Teaching assistants are well deployed and contribute effectively to pupils' learning. Their questioning is well focused to ensure that all pupils and especially those who have moderate learning difficulties fully participate in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A majority of the pupils find the curriculum interesting. In addition to English, mathematics and science they especially enjoy information and communication technology (ICT), art and music. Some pupils are learning to play the double bass, for example. Useful links are made between subjects such as ICT and mathematics, and literacy and art. Key Stage 2 pupils are pleased to have the opportunity to learn French. Pupils commented that they would like to explore more links between subjects. New equipment has helped to increase the use of ICT across the curriculum and pupils have worked with other schools to improve their ICT skills. A range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum, especially in sport. Increasing use is made of the local community, for example, pupils visit a local archaeological dig and nearby farms. The forthcoming revised curriculum is timely and aims to develop wider cross-curricular links and a clearer progression of skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. Pupils state that they always have someone to confide in if they are worried or if they want to share good news. The good values and ethos of the school are reinforced in assemblies and in circle times. Procedures to safeguard pupils' health and safety are thorough and pupils feel safe. The school works well with external services especially when helping the most vulnerable pupils, including any looked after pupils. The good support provided to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is an example of the school's promotion of equal opportunities. Teachers and teaching assistants provide helpful personal and academic guidance to the pupils. Parents praise the schools' work with vulnerable pupils. Marking is inconsistent and personal targets are under-used in helping individual pupils to raise their standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is making significant and continuing improvements in pupils' achievement, progress and standards. Self-evaluation is now thorough and the school has clear direction. The headteacher's tracking of pupils' progress is also thorough and is helping to develop the setting of more challenging targets. The staff and the headteacher are working successfully as a team to address the legacy of inadequate achievement. Achievement is now satisfactory. Governors are increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and now regularly monitor the school development plan. Governors are about to implement a programme of more sharply focused visits to the school. Provision for teachers' professional development has improved and is closely linked to the needs of the pupils. For example, teachers visit other schools to observe good practice and then share their observations with other staff. The day-to-day operation of the school functions smoothly and new staff are well supported by the headteacher and colleagues. The school's

improvement has accelerated over the last year and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. The headteacher and governors know what to do to improve the school further.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marcham Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, Abingdon, OX13 6PY

Thank you for your help during my visit to your school. Your school is satisfactory and improving. I enjoyed talking to you and hearing how much you like your school and that you feel healthy and safe. I was pleased to see that you have good attitudes to learning and that you behave well in lessons and in the playground. I was also pleased to see you achieving well in your lessons. I know how much you like giving your views and your headteacher and staff value what you have to say, but I think you do not have enough opportunity to take on responsibilities. You particularly like the opportunities offered for you to take part in a variety of clubs and sporting activities.

You are well looked after by the adults who work in your school and your headteacher, governors and staff are determined that you will do well.

I have asked your headteacher to start using the new curriculum that the school has devised for you. I have asked her to improve your teachers' marking of your work and also to ensure that you all have personal targets to help you improve your learning. I have also asked her to make sure that children in the Reception class make better progress.

Yours sincerely

Jeff White

Lead Inspector