

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Infants' School, Alvescot

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123189
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314533
Inspection date	26 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Liz Savage
Headteacher	Mrs Sam King
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Alvescot Bampton OX18 2PU
Telephone number	01993 842535
Fax number	01993 842535

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional inspector. The inspector investigated the following issues in detail: achievement and standards, pupils' personal development, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national data and the school's own assessment records, curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school at work, interviews with staff and pupils and parents' questionnaires. 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 were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small school serves a rural community. The local area is affluent. Most children attend a playgroup or nursery before starting in Reception. As they enter the school, their skills and understanding are usually above that typical of the age group. Almost all pupils are from a White British background with English as their home language. Very few pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Many pupils are from RAF families some of whom are on active service. A quarter of the pupils joined or left the school at times other than the usual admission or transfer times during the last year, which is higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils make excellent progress and achieve exceptionally high standards. Pupils thrive in the purposeful, friendly and caring atmosphere and rise to the challenging targets set by teachers. The most significant factors in the school's success are excellent leadership and management and high quality teaching. The headteacher plays a pivotal role in the drive for continuous improvement and receives first class support from the well-informed governing body. Almost all parents returned the inspection questionnaires, and they were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Typical comments were, 'The headteacher and staff have impressed us with their dedication, enthusiasm and professionalism' and 'This is more than a school, it's a family.'

Children make excellent progress in the Foundation Class and get off to a flying start in Year 1. Teachers ensure they build as much as possible on this strong base and set challenging targets, so that, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, mathematics and science are typically exceptionally high. The most able pupils reach their potential because they are identified early and given appropriately demanding work. Similarly, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from the meticulous assessment systems, which detect their specific needs. Rapid and effective intervention ensures that these pupils progress very well, with many reaching the standards expected of all pupils by the end of Year 2.

Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and thoroughly enjoy learning. They bounce into school eager to learn. Their personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects is outstanding. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and many commented on the friendly nature of the school and the excellent relationships they enjoy with each other and their teachers. There are excellent procedures for safeguarding children. One parent, who praised the school's 'caring, loving and nurturing environment' summed up the views of many.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. They have an extremely clear idea of how to avoid hazards at school and at home, and what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school and the local community. By the time they leave, they are very well equipped with key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Together with their mature attitudes and love of learning, this means they have an extremely good base for future learning and well-being.

The teaching is outstanding. Excellent relationships underpin lessons, which mean that pupils are not hesitant in offering suggestions. Teachers provide very good feedback to pupils and ensure they are aware of the next steps in their learning, often involving them in reviewing their own progress. Written comments on pupils' work are expressed in child friendly language that praises success but also includes a specific point for improvement. Staff note how well children are doing continuously to ensure that the level of challenge in lessons is sustained. Pupils who move from other schools benefit from the well-honed assessment procedures, which quickly identify their individual needs. Strengths are highlighted and gaps in their previous learning are quickly addressed. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, supporting individuals and small groups. For example, they work very effectively when teaching early reading skills through the school's 'letters and sounds' programme.

The curriculum is outstanding and provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils' academic and personal development. As one parent commented, 'Children are valued and encouraged

to discover their own strengths as well as celebrating the good things that others do.' This was evident during an assembly when pupils listened spellbound to the headteacher as she discussed the origins of 'Stir-Up Sunday' and mixed trinkets into a Christmas pudding. They spontaneously applauded as a child with pronounced learning difficulties took his turn at adding an egg and stirring the mixture. The school makes some good links between subjects but acknowledges that opportunities are missed to link work in literacy and numeracy to subjects such as science or history.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She inspires pupils and staff, and has the entire confidence of parents. The headteacher has successfully promoted links with the local community and the continuing high regard in which the school is held owes much to her efforts. Governors provide very strong support and use their detailed knowledge of the school to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. The size of the school means that all teachers have several areas of responsibility. They carry these out very well. The school is aware that a staff member leaving can have a significant impact. It is rightly reviewing the roles of subject managers so that leadership can be quickly transferred to new staff to ensure the best possible continuity.

The school has an excellent capacity to improve. This is because there is a common sense of purpose and a complete lack of complacency. Well-established procedures for self-evaluation mean that staff and governors are very well aware of the school's many strengths and areas for further development. The impact of the highly effective leadership and management is seen in the excellent progress since the last inspection. Weaknesses in the provision in the Foundation Stage and ICT have been successfully addressed and high standards have been maintained.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make rapid progress. Children soon settle in the Reception class because parents are fully involved in the induction process. This excellent partnership continues through the year and parents value this highly. One said, 'I am extremely comfortable in school as a parent, nothing is too much trouble.' The indoor and outdoor environment provides a rich variety of opportunities for learning. Children benefit from an excellent balance between teacher-led work and activities they choose themselves. Staff closely observe children in various contexts and record their progress across all areas of learning. This builds up a clear picture of how individual children are progressing and what they need to learn next. Children respond eagerly to new challenges and make excellent progress. In recent years, almost all children have met or exceeded the levels expected by the end of the Reception year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more links between subjects to further enhance pupils' enjoyment and the relevance of their learning.
- Refine the systems for subject leadership to help ensure continuity when staff leave.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

5 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Infants' School,
Alvescot, Bampton, OX18 2PU

Thank you very much for helping me when I visited your school. It was delightful to meet you and I was very impressed indeed by your excellent behaviour and your friendliness. You all told me how much you like your school and I am not surprised. It is an excellent school. All the adults in school care for you very well and a special feature is the way that you care for one another other too. I saw this in lessons, during assembly and at playtime.

Your teachers work hard to give you interesting and enjoyable lessons and I could see how much you enjoy learning. You make good progress at school and by the time you reach the end of Year 2 you have learned a lot, reaching standards that are much better than lots of other schools.

Your school is extremely well led by your headteacher, and the staff and governors are giving her enormous help to make the school even better. The school wants to find ways of helping you enjoy learning even more, for example by linking your work in literacy and numeracy to other subjects such as science or history. I think this is a good idea. I also agree that the teachers who keep an eye on each subject do a good job and could be helped a little more with this.

Your parents think that this is an outstanding school and they are right. As well as exciting lessons, you have lots of clubs, activities and trips that help you to learn other things that make your education even more exciting. Enjoy your time at school and continue to work hard.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector