

Earley St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110009
Local Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Inspection number	325079
Inspection dates	31 March –1 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrusell

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 aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	495
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	51
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stuart Gilmour
Headteacher	Mr Steve Scott
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road Earley Reading RG6 1EY
Telephone number	01189 261 657
Fax number	01189 266 358

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is much larger than average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Nursery and three Reception classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average compared with most schools. The majority of these are of Asian descent, the largest group being of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils with a home language other than English is above average. A small number of these are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. These pupils have a range of needs, such as speech, language and communication difficulties. There are also a small number of pupils who have social and behavioural difficulties. The school has gained the Healthy School and Activemark awards.

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's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The headteacher, ably assisted by his senior leadership team and well supported by governors, ensures that all pupils are well cared for and develop a good level of personal skills. There are strong links with parents and other agencies, which contribute well to the effective pastoral care and support that the school provides for its pupils and their families. Although the majority of parents are pleased with the school, a small number feel that the school does not take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. However, the inspection finds that the school works closely with parents. Curriculum workshops and regular newsletters encourage them to be involved in the life of the school and to support their children's learning. Pupils enjoy school. They particularly enjoy using computers and the wide range of well-attended clubs provided. Developments to the curriculum have made productive links between subjects, and these are starting to add further interest and enjoyment to pupils' learning. Specialist coaching engages pupils in a good range of sports. Along with their excellent understanding of nutrition and diet, this encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, which is recognised in national awards. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities within the school, for example as peer mediators and playground friends. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning, contributing to the satisfactory progress they make in their learning.

From their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils achieve satisfactorily, and standards by the end of Year 6 are overall above average. Although achievement is satisfactory, pupils make inconsistent rates of progress across classes. This is because teachers do not always plan lessons that have sufficient challenge for every pupil. In addition, some of the work provided in lessons is not matched sufficiently well to the needs of every pupil. Although this was an area for improvement at the last inspection, more work is still to be done to ensure that lessons provide an appropriate level of challenge for all abilities so that pupils consistently make good progress. Pupils themselves are not sufficiently aware of how well they are doing. The use of individual targets, constructive marking and evaluation of learning within lessons is inconsistent, and does not always provide strong guidance for pupils on how to improve their work.

Despite the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, subject leaders are clear about the improvements needed in their subjects in order to raise achievement and standards. For example, action to improve pupils' writing has been effective. Samples of written work are monitored each half term to check on the progress that pupils are making. This progress is now carefully tracked, and additional support put in place to address any underachievement and accelerate the progress of pupils who are falling behind. Opportunities to write for a specific purpose are adding interest to pupils' written work, reflecting improvements to teachers' subject knowledge and effective staff training. In mathematics, an analysis of test papers has highlighted specific weaknesses which resulted in review and improvement of the policy for developing calculation strategies. This is starting to have an impact on achievement and standards and is evident in pupils' work. Checking pupils' science books has highlighted that there are not enough opportunities for them to carry out investigations and record their findings, so the staff have altered their planning to provide more practical work. Given the success of the school in identifying where improvements are needed and the increasing impact of its actions, the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills and knowledge that are higher than those expected for their age, particularly in personal and social development. Close links with parents are built up from the time the children start school. Home visits and opportunities for parents and children to visit the school and meet staff ensure that children quickly settle into the Nursery and Reception classes and pick up the daily routines. The school's strong regard for their welfare further helps children to feel secure, enjoy their early experiences of school, and become very confident learners. Children behave well, and quickly build up positive relationships with staff and other children. The children, including those who are learning English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily. By the end of the Reception Year, most children are working securely within the early learning goals expected at this age, with some exceeding them. However, the school has identified a particular weakness in writing and has started to address this by providing more opportunities for children to improve their early writing skills. There is a good balance between teacher-directed activities and those that children choose for themselves. In the Nursery, children's spoken language is especially well developed. Adult-led activities provide good opportunities for the children to respond to questioning. They also respond by joining in with well known stories, which gives them confidence in speaking out loud. During independent activities, adults work well with children, not only supervising what they are doing but also engaging them in conversation to further their learning and understanding. Such support is not as strong in the Reception Year, where the existence of three entry points per year presents the school with a lack of staffing continuity.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Records of assessment are well kept, helping with transition between the Nursery and Reception, and between Reception and Key Stage 1. The Nursery is well set out, with equipment, displays and role-play opportunities that extend children's learning both indoors and outdoors. In Reception, a designated outdoor area has only recently been provided and a classroom extension is shortly to be opened. There is scope to improve resources and areas in the Reception classes to reflect more fully the different areas of learning, although the staff are aware of this and have made a good start by setting out plans to address this. Plans and finance are in hand to quickly bring about improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers make the fullest use of assessment information to plan work that challenges all pupils in Years 1 to 6, as well as children across the whole of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that all pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work.

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 achieve satisfactorily. When they leave the school in Year 6, standards overall are above average. They have risen in English as a result of actions taken by the school to improve pupils'

writing. For example, last year's national test results show that standards in English were well above the national average. Tracking data shows that pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are doing better in mathematics than was the case in previous years. Standards in science are broadly average. The school has identified that progress across the school is inconsistent. Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 2 vary from year to year, but are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils starting in Year 6 have not all made the progress expected of them throughout the school. Well-focused teaching in Year 6, additional support, and smaller classes to support pupils who need a boost in numeracy, have helped to accelerate pupils' progress towards the levels they are expected to attain. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are learning English as an additional language, make similar progress to others. Boys generally do not do as well as girls in writing. The school has responded well to this and now provides more opportunities to stimulate ideas for writing, especially for boys, through its new curriculum and by providing opportunities for pupils to use drama as a stimulus for writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. One parent commented, 'St Peter's provides a positive and inclusive culture in which the children learn the values of good citizenship.' Pupils' enjoyment of school, together with their good attitudes to learning, is reflected in their good attendance. They are friendly, polite and well behaved. They say that bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Pupils contribute very well to the school community through an effective school council, and appreciate the responsibility of helping younger pupils and those new to the school. They take an active part in church and community events. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, supported by the school's very close links with the church. They have a very good understanding of different cultures and faiths. It was clear from talking to pupils about the Easter service that they had prepared and taken part in that they greatly valued the experience. Social skills are very well developed and are helped by regular opportunities to work and play in different groups. Given these strong personal qualities and the improving standards in basic skills, pupils are well prepared for their future life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is some good teaching, the quality varies. Classes are generally managed well and relationships between staff and pupils are good. Occasionally, when the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils are not all fully involved, there is some minor restlessness and inattention. In better lessons, teachers build on pupils' prior learning to ensure a continuity of progress; lessons are well planned and prepared so that pupils are fully engaged, actively involved and enthusiastic about their work. This was seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson where activities were well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, and they were engrossed in using and applying their mathematical skills. Interactive white boards are used well to aid introductions to lessons and to enliven pupils' learning. The focus of the lesson is shared with pupils. However, teachers and teaching assistants do not always follow this up with sufficient opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning and how well they are doing. Planning shows activities for different levels

of ability, but at times these do not offer sufficient challenge, and in some lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough, with the result that pupils' progress slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has recently been reviewed and adapted to provide pupils with increased opportunities to develop their creativity. This is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment. The new curriculum provides pupils with meaningful contexts in which to write and, as a result, is contributing to improvements in writing. However, its full impact on raising achievement and standards in all subjects has yet to be evaluated. The school has put in place plans to raise standards in science by ensuring that pupils have increased opportunities to carry out investigations, but these also have yet to be fully implemented and evaluated for their impact on raising achievement and standards. The curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development as they complete projects on India and Pakistan, and celebrate cultures through the sharing of food, costumes and activities such as mehndi painting. Pupils have good opportunities to learn to speak French, and this is a strong feature as pupils throughout school receive specialist teaching. Visits to a farm and a museum, as well as residential visits to France, make a good contribution to pupils' teamwork and social skills. Pupils' information and communication technology skills are well developed in discrete lessons as well as across subjects. The 'learning platform' programme is helping to develop pupils' independence, as they are increasingly taking ownership over their own work and completing tasks at home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is strongly committed to caring for pupils. Policies and procedures to protect them are fully in place, ensuring that arrangements for their safety, care and welfare are secure. However, it was noticed that some pupils were arriving at school before the time when it had been stated that supervision would be provided to ensure their safety. Parents have been notified about this. The school is right to point this out, as it cannot guarantee that pupils can be supervised if they come to school too early. Staff know the pupils well and relationships are good. The additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed, and draws on good links with outside agencies. The early identification of pupils with particular needs, such as those relating to speech, language and communication, ensures that they are effectively supported. Those who have social and behavioural needs benefit from social skills groups run by well-trained teaching assistants. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are provided with additional challenging activities. New systems are helping the school to track pupils' progress. This enables the school to identify where pupils are not making the expected progress and to put additional support in place. It also enables curriculum targets to be set for pupils, showing them what they need to do to improve their work. However, pupils are not sufficiently aware of these or of their purpose, so any impact on their progress is reduced. Although teachers mark pupils' work regularly, the use of constructive comments to guide future learning is inconsistent across classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers at all levels work well together. The school development plan identifies relevant priorities and is used effectively to drive school improvement. Self-evaluation involves staff at all levels and is satisfactory, although it has yet to address some of the inconsistencies of practice across the school. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked, and information used to set challenging end-of-year targets for pupils to aim for. However, records show that pupils' progress towards these targets varies. The quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored, but monitoring is not sufficiently focused on the progress that pupils are making in their learning. Curriculum leaders monitor lessons and planning in their subjects, as well as providing training for staff. Consequently, writing standards have risen, particularly at Key Stage 2. Steps taken to raise achievement and standards in mathematics are starting to bear fruit. The school has done much work to promote pupils' understanding of and respect for communities, both locally and globally. However, its assessment of this provision and its impact on community cohesion has yet to be fully evaluated. Governors are committed to school improvement and have a good understanding of the school's strengths as well as of areas for further development. They visit lessons and have a good understanding of assessment data, which helps them to monitor the school's performance and to challenge them on this.

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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	3

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	3

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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 learners' needs?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

23 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earley St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Reading, RG6 1EY

I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were always interesting to talk to, polite and helpful. You spoke enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things in which you take part. We have decided that Earley St Peter's is a satisfactory school.

We liked these things the most.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle quickly into school, become very confident, and enjoy their time in school.
- Your writing has really improved since the last inspection.
- You all get on very well together.
- The school makes sure that you are safe and well looked after, and provides good support for those who find learning difficult.
- You enjoy school and are all very keen to keep fit and eat the right things.
- You have lots of exciting events and many school clubs.
- You are keen to take on responsibilities.

We have asked the school to work on the following things now.

- The school looks carefully at how well you are doing in lessons. It must use this information more to plan work that is just right for each of you, so that it is not too easy or too hard. This will help you all to make the best progress possible.
- The teachers need to help you become aware of how well you are doing and how you could do even better. We have asked them to ensure that marking helps you to understand the importance of your targets, and to provide more opportunities for you to talk about how well you are doing in lessons.

You can help too, by thinking about your targets and looking at the marking in your books, so that your work gets even better.

We did enjoy visiting your school and watching you learn.

Yours faithfully

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector