



**The NACE Challenge Award : Assessor's Report
Finchampstead C.E. Aided Primary School**

Summary of Strengths:

Portfolio Scrutiny, Interview and work samples

- This is a small school that secures a big impact because the actions of leaders, staff and governors systematically and cohesively nurture ambition and achievement for all, within a culture in which the drive for excellence is underpinned by meticulously structured and highly effective support for pupils' personal, social and emotional development.
- This means that high expectations and aspirations across the curriculum are balanced and supported by a commitment to securing pupils' understanding of the skills and attitudes of successful of learning : a readiness to learn, resourcefulness, resilience, reflectiveness and responsibility . Parents value this, praising the *"attitude of ' I can do anything if I try' which has definitely come from the school"*. They talk of a *"very inclusive school"* in which there is *" no feeling of we're different or we're better"* and in which their children are motivated, have high self esteem and confidence.
- The outcome is that pupils of all ages are ambitious for themselves, but also recognise that effort is a significant part of success: *"You get given challenges. Knowing you've got a talent helps you not to give up, to carry on and get better"* ; *" I've spent more time focusing on the things I'm not so good at, and they're getting better too."*
- Achievement Assemblies and day to day interactions in class, in which adults and children recognise and praise successes, reinforce this positive ethos. Children clearly take pleasure in each other's successes, such as playing at county level in cricket or perfecting a violin duet. They are equally comfortable in, and proud of, sharing their own journey to success : *" My literacy is getting better because my handwriting is better."*
- The cohesive policy for 'more able' learners makes it explicit that the highest quality provision requires innovative approaches to organisational strategies and curriculum planning, as well as focused resourcing that includes staff training. Therefore, a cornerstone of challenge in the classroom is teaching by 'stage not age', which enables children to be taught according to their abilities and next steps. Children recognise that *"having different classes for different levels means its' harder when you get moved"*, and perceptively note that *"moving classes also helps us make friends."* As a result, children receive a curriculum that is appropriately challenging and outstanding relationships are evident, characterised by co-operation and collaboration e.g more able Key Stage 2 mathematicians helped each other to investigate, apply and explain Pythagorus' theorem.
- The school's curriculum includes innovative learning within and across subject boundaries, as well as beyond the classroom . For example, Key Stage 2 children dressed up as The Highwayman and hid in nearby undergrowth, inspiring exemplary empathetic writing showing skilful application of language: *"Obscured by the emerald undergrowth, I see the breeze bullying the leafy trees so they tremble with fear"*; boys are as motivated to write as girls, enthusiastically describing a wet survival day as *"muddy and joyful"* , in letters written about shelter building and camp fires; and the Business and Enterprise program provides practical opportunities for creative thinking showing the children how their key learning habits should be life-long.
- Curriculum reviews and exceptions reports have securely informed improvements to provision such as resourcing for Level 6 mathematics and increased challenge in music through an ICT programme. As a result of the children's evaluation of provision, resourcing such as a climbing wall and nature trail respond to the interests of children as shown in their multiple intelligences profile. Most recently, recognition that the school has not yet utilised children's understanding of an increasingly technological world, has led to the ambition to purchase 'tablets' to develop and use these skills to provide further opportunities for self directed challenge.
- The highly knowledgeable and skilled leader for Able and Talented provision has had a significant impact on classroom provision, improving the use of strategies for higher level thinking and challenge through training and regularly updated guidance in the staff handbook. As a member of the senior

leadership team, she appropriately demonstrates relentless attention to the impact of actions on provision and drive for continual improvement. As a result, there is clear evidence that graphic organisers are in use, enabling children to classify, prioritise and analyse; Blooms taxonomy and the multiple intelligences inform planning to challenge and motivate children; philosophy sessions have resulted in even the youngest children giving reasoned answers to questions and being equally confident in asking their own questions to extend understanding.

- This commitment to, and ambition for, the children at Finchampstead is reflected across the school, with leaders and staff always looking for ways in which provision can be even better. For example, the librarian has used the '100 books to read before you are 14' to create a challenge booklet for more able readers; good use has been made of the outcomes of a learning walk to initiate 'peeling off' for more able learners at the start of lessons, so they do not repeat learning, but are motivated and challenged from the start.
- The impact of policy and practice is unstintingly pursued. The school rigorously tracks, analyses and evaluates pupil progress, giving attention not only to performance, but also to factors such as attendance, adjusted provision and social and emotional needs. The involvement of all staff and pupils is comprehensive. The leader for Able and Talented provision is involved in pupil progress discussions in Senior Leadership Team meetings; the outcomes from these meetings are tracked through to planning to ensure next steps are addressed; Learning Support Assistants take part in weekly team meetings, discussing the progress, needs and provision for all children; pupils complete questionnaires, reflecting on what has gone well, what they need to improve, their effort and behaviour, and contribute to reports which are discussed with parents and teachers at the Learning Reviews. Where children's progress causes concern, support is sensitively planned, often on a one-to-one basis, with parents praising the time and care given by teachers and its positive impact in overcoming difficulties in learning " *My child felt really listened to and really supported.*"
- As a result, difficulties in progress are effectively addressed, supporting a significant trend of attainment above national averages at the end of both key stages. Sustained and improving challenge is evident in the fact that an exceptional dip in mathematics for girls (including a significant percentage of late entry girls) in 2013, is not reflected in the current Years 4 to 6 where girls demonstrate high standards and mathematical confidence.
- A combination of inspirational experts and extended school provision provides experiences which motivate children, encourage aspirations, and instigate interest in future careers. For example, expert musical teaching has challenged children to learn difficult and complex accompaniments, leading to group and solo performances at the Wokingham Area and School Music Association concerts; coaching from sports people such as Charlotte Edwards, England Cricket, has inspired young cricketers; drama coaching has led to auditions for film and television; and skills learnt at the Chess club have led to children playing chess at county level.
- Transition processes are strong, and include the use of a transition proforma to support pupils moving to another school at any age, not only on entry to the secondary phase of their education. As a result, there is evidence of progress continuing, for example an ex-pupil with strong philosophy and debating skills is involved in a GCSE debating team ahead of her age. The school also seeks and uses feedback from ex-pupils to improve outcomes for children e.g. an identified need for greater skills in French has led to an increase in opportunities to learn French through a school club.
- High quality teaching for the more able is sustained and continually improved because leaders allocate time and resources to extensive, well informed and focused professional development, underpinned by staff meetings, peer observations, and Performance Management processes, that give specific attention to provision and progress for these learners.
- Good resourcing is continually improved to support teaching and learning. An example is the progressive development of ICT. Younger children are now engaging in the use of e-mail; the Learning Platform is becoming increasingly used by more able writers to post news articles for the School Magazine and blogs; Code Club experts are now Lead Learners teaching skills to others; and the specialist music teacher now has the resources to challenge children to compose complex arrangements using ICT. Links with other organisations are effectively used to enhance resourcing, addressing gaps. For example, *borrowing advanced science equipment such signal generators, oscilloscopes, and decibel meters* so that teaching could challenge and inspire recently spotted young scientists.
- A range of opportunities ensure children's leadership skills are nurtured and developed, most

noticeable of which is the Year 5 Playground Buddies scheme. This has had a significant impact with parents noticing their children “ *learn skills they didn’t know they had*” and children passionately talking about how this ensures no child is left alone: “*We think that’s really good!*”

- Pupils are being encouraged to be increasingly active participants in evaluating their own progress, identifying when they think a target has been met; using feedback to address inaccuracies or demonstrate improved understanding, and in the best instances responding reflectively to a lesson noting growing understanding :”*The first three confused me, then I worked it out*
- Comprehensive systems ensure parents are well informed, enabled to support their children’s learning, and have an active voice in evaluating provision. For example, in addition to a wealth of newsletters, Learning Events welcome parents into the school to learn about learning from their children; weekly homework includes challenging choices for the more able in Key Stage 2; and holiday guidance includes ‘Daily Maths’ ideas to encourage parents to use features of daily life such as cooking and travel to challenge their children to apply their mathematical understanding. Parents who find it difficult to attend school meetings/events receive individual guidance, resulting in home and school effectively supporting good progress in learning.
- Governors are very well informed through termly reports but ensure active participation in monitoring provision through a dedicated link governor for ‘more able provision’ who discusses the school’s analysis of pupil performance, undertakes regular meetings with the ‘more able’ leader, and attends INSET and assemblies. As a result that governors have a secure understanding of school successes, next steps, and why these are needed. This ensures support is well focused and impact pursued.

Where Teaching and Learning is good or better

- Questioning by teachers and learners themselves, explores and extends understanding.
- Innovative introductions immediately engage, challenge and explore understanding
- Subject expertise develops the understanding and use of subject specific language to support learning
- Well planned problem solving and open investigations require critical and analytical thinking
- Feedback requires thought and response and is pursued by both teacher and child

Summary of Areas for Development:

Portfolio Scrutiny, Interview and work samples

- Develop the New Curriculum so that it responds to the increasingly high attainment achieved by the youngest children.
- Enhance investigation and challenge, extending in-depth learning, through the use of tablets
- Enable staff and pupils to take part in collaborative work with other schools to build and share the subject expertise that supports in depth learning and focused progression.
- Utilise opportunities such as Learning Events for a Parents Focus group to discuss provision and impact.

Teaching and Learning

- Secure consistency in the use of learning focused objectives and success criteria, including specific objectives and/or success criteria for able children in all teaching groups
- Develop consistency in teacher and child use of targets and response to feedback
- Pursue initiatives to encourage children to reflect on their learning, for example through learning conversations, learning logs or loops of learning.

Date Award Achieved	4 th June 2014	Assessor	Ann O’Hara
Date for reaccreditation	4 th June 2018	Signature	