

Parrett and Axe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113807
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357427
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lindsay Williamson
Headteacher	Nigel Evans
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed five teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Additionally, inspectors spoke to a small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school. They observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' progress, records of governing body meetings, development planning and monitoring, local authority reports, a range of policies and procedures, including those associated with safeguarding, curriculum planning documents and a sample of pupils' work. They also scrutinised questionnaires returned by 68 parents and carers, 70 pupils and 13 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the school is working to eradicate differences in attainment between English and mathematics, especially through encouraging pupils to use their numeracy skills more in solving mathematical problems.
- Whether the school is successfully addressing any differences in the achievement of boys and girls.

Information about the school

Parrett and Axe Primary is a small village school where some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils' needs mainly relate to specific learning, behavioural, emotional and social, and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school holds National Healthy School Status and the Eco School Bronze award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Parrett and Axe Primary is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection and some aspects of its work are outstanding. Accurate self-evaluation and good development planning ensure that weaker aspects of provision and pupils' progress are being successfully addressed, with a determination to reach the challenging goals the school has set for itself. The highly-skilled leadership of the headteacher has fostered excellent commitment and teamwork amongst the staff and governing body. This gives the school a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils' considerable enjoyment of school is evident in their excellent attendance and commitment to learning. Pupils have an outstanding awareness of how to live a healthy and safe lifestyle and contribute exceptionally well to school and community life. This is evident in their focus on conservation which helped achieve the Eco School Bronze award. Their contribution to other communities is fostered through strong links with schools in Bristol and Nepal which are part of the school's excellent provision for community cohesion. These links also promote pupils' good understanding of the diversity of other cultures contributing in part to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave extremely well in the older classes, although a small minority of younger pupils, mainly boys, find it difficult to concentrate and sometimes interrupt learning with loud talking.

Teaching is uniformly good and occasionally lessons provide the rigour and excitement that result in pupils' excellent progress. Reception children get off to a good start. Throughout the school, staff provide challenging activities that take full account of the stage at which each pupil is working. Close attention is given to providing tasks that engage both boys and girls and ensures they achieve equally well. However, behaviour management in the younger classes does not always ensure that boys remain on task. The curriculum is rich and varied. Grouping pupils according to their ability across Years 3 to 6 and recent developments such as a project to support story writing are raising attainment well. Pupils' writing has improved, although too few pupils use cursive handwriting and a minority present their work untidily. Pupils' application of numeracy skills to help solve problems has improved exceptionally well, with the result that the attainment gap between English and mathematics is rapidly closing. Pupils develop very good scientific investigation skills.

Special activities to support pupils who find learning difficult are exceptionally good and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given high-quality care and support. Pupils are extremely well cared for, and staff work very closely with the families of pupils who have significant needs. Outstanding partnerships with a wide range of other schools and organisations provide excellent support for pupils' education and welfare.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and progress by:
 - increasing the percentage of outstanding lessons by the end of December 2011, especially through ensuring that staff consistently provide a brisk pace and excitement to support learning, and apply firmer behaviour management strategies for younger pupils
 - having higher expectations of how pupils should present their written work and encouraging neater and cursive handwriting from an earlier age.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Skills on entry to the Reception Year are broadly at the level expected. The school's attention to personalised learning, which is well targeted at pupils' needs and interests, together with a strong focus on developing important skills, helps pupils to make good progress across all year groups. By the time pupils leave Year 6, attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average. Pupils write effectively in a range of different genres, skilfully giving both sides of an argument or creating interesting story characters to keep the reader involved. They use imaginative and very effective vocabulary, although too often their work is spoilt by poor handwriting and presentation. Recorded work in mathematics is much neater, helping pupils to calculate accurately and use their skills to solve problems well. Pupils gain a very good understanding of important scientific concepts through very well thought out investigations. Strengths such as these ensure that all pupils achieve equally well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language. As a result attainment is rising well.

Older pupils are extremely mature learners. They thoughtfully discuss tasks with adults and approach their activities with a determination to do their best. The school has wisely capitalised on its excellent links with other schools to support the most able pupils, with a result that extremely talented young scientists are emerging. Staff have been quick to use pupils' commitment and maturity to support school and community life. For example, school councillors helped revise the anti-bullying policy and 'Playground Friends' help ensure it is a safe and harmonious community. Healthy School Status was achieved through pupils' enthusiastic monitoring of lunch boxes and participation in the many clubs providing physical activities. Pupils' knowledge of what to do in risky situations, for example with regard to fire safety, is impressive. Involvement in village life, for example taking part in the yearly pantomime and joining in gardening club events, is excellent. Pupils are extremely committed to fundraising for people in need, organising events and managing the money, skills which help prepare them well for the future.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' development and well-being. Staff have worked hard to ensure that activities help pupils to gain important skills and provide opportunities to develop their talents and interests over a wide range of subjects. Thoughtfully adapted planning effectively meets the needs of all pupils including those most at risk of underachieving and the potential high achievers. Enrichment activities, such as the visits of an artist in residence and a traditional story teller, help pupils produce some high quality work. Carefully created links allow pupils to use their skills in a wide range of subjects. For example, older pupils' data handling skills are used to especially good effect in identifying patterns in science investigations.

The recent curriculum arrangements are a key factor in supporting consistently good teaching. Teachers explain what pupils are expected to achieve very clearly, setting challenging targets for them which are regularly checked so pupils have a good awareness of how well they are doing. Older pupils become skilled at checking their own and other pupils' progress. Teachers' good subject expertise helps pupils to gain new skills quickly, with the interactive whiteboards being used exceptionally well, for example in showing a short clip of a story that helps pupils to write a convincing alternative ending. During the inspection, some lesson activities inspired pupils to do exceptionally well, making excellent progress. This was evident in the very effective stories pupils were planning about resolving a problem and in the careful calculations to identify if 'Three for Two Offers'

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were worth purchasing. The brisk pace to learning and exciting features that typify outstanding lessons are not yet consistent across the school.

The school's commitment to providing the very best level of care and support for all pupils is a major reason why the school has been invited to apply for the local authority's Inclusion Quality Mark. The level of support provided for pupils at risk of underachieving, by teachers and the highly-skilled teaching assistants, is excellent. Outstanding links with the local pre-school and secondary school help to provide excellent induction and transfer arrangements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A culture of self-improvement has been carefully nurtured by the inspirational headteacher. His lesson monitoring is exceptionally well focused on improving teaching and subject leaders are increasing their skills in this area. The new programme for tracking pupils' progress has already begun to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. A wide range of other evidence, including regular consultation with pupils and their families, feeds effectively into self-evaluation procedures, with all involved in helping to support improvement.

The governing body fulfils its duties well, holding the school to account on important decisions and playing an effective strategic role, especially in targeting resources to support pupils. Individual governors use their expertise especially well, for example in data analysis and health and safety checks. Safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly updated and rigorously applied, with required training for this aspect fully up to date. Pupils and their parents and carers are fully confident that children are safe and free from harm at all times. The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers, keeping them well informed about their children's development and encouraging them to support their children's learning in different ways. The school's rigorous anti-discrimination procedures ensure relationships throughout the whole school community are harmonious and that pupils' equality of opportunity is good.

Every opportunity is taken to enhance pupils' education and welfare, leading to the school forging excellent relationships with local schools to enrich learning in subjects like science and physical education. Outstanding provision for community cohesion results in pupils' excellent awareness of different social, religious and cultural groups and is fostered through partnerships with other schools and settings. For example, exchange visits with a Bristol school provided excellent understanding about a range of faiths and cultures in this

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country, whilst information exchanged with a Nepalese school gives pupils an outstanding awareness of a very different way of life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although skills on entry are mainly at the expected level they have declined in early literacy and personal and social skills in recent years, the latter case being mainly associated with boys, some of whom have emotional, behavioural and social needs. Staff have addressed this well by providing practical and exciting activities aimed at enthusing both boys and girls. Their good progress results in above-average attainment by the time they enter Year 1. The castles topic inspired some excellent role play as knights and princesses and children wrote effective stories about the people who live in the castle they designed. Important skills are learnt in a very practical way, such as using the water play tray for 'Lucky Dip' to find a numeral for the age of a sea creature and then compare which child's is the eldest. Children skilfully learn to spell words by using plastic letters before attempting the difficult task of writing them. They very much enjoy finding out about the world around them, especially through growing things. Children become very enthusiastic about their learning through this approach. However, a minority of boys find concentration very difficult, not always sitting quietly when they should and occasionally becoming over enthusiastic and talking too loudly, disturbing the work of others. On these occasions staff are not always firm enough in quickly re-establishing a calm, working environment.

Adults work well together as a team, making regular observations of what children are learning in their independent tasks so individual needs are well planned for. Children who find learning difficult are quickly provided with tasks to support their learning. This is one reason why a good proportion go on to achieve average attainment levels by the time

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they leave. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. As in the rest of the school, staff continually evaluate the impact of provision on children's learning, carefully targeting weaker areas so it improves.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A large proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. This is higher than the average response rate.

A very large majority of parents and carers have positive views. They are unanimous in the view that their children enjoy school, are well taught and well prepared for the future. They are also very confident that children are kept safe and that they develop a healthy lifestyle. Those parents who wrote or spoke to the inspection team also praised induction procedures and the support for children with specific needs. Inspection evidence supports these positive views.

Of most concern was the way unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. Inspection evidence and pupils themselves find that the systems in place support good behaviour and that staff generally apply these rigorously when pupils do not behave appropriately. However, evidence shows that there are a few occasions when staff are slow at curbing the over-exuberance and noise of younger pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Parrett and Axe Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school

The inspection team received 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	68	21	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	74	17	25	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	57	26	38	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	56	28	41	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	59	26	38	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	51	29	43	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	69	18	26	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	59	25	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	59	23	34	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	41	30	44	6	9	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	60	23	34	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	72	16	24	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	72	15	22	4	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parrett and Axe Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Beaminster DT8 9HJ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed our time talking to you and seeing all the things you do. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us. We think you attend a good school and are very pleased that you and your parents and carers agree.

Here are some of the things we found out that are especially good about your school.

- You make good progress and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6.
- You enjoy school very much and attendance levels are high.
- You have an excellent awareness of how to keep safe and healthy and you make an outstanding contribution to your school and community life.
- Staff are exceptionally good at setting up partnerships with other schools and organisations to help your education and welfare. We are especially impressed by the opportunities you have for science in your local secondary school and the links with the schools in Bristol and Nepal.
- Staff take excellent care of you and provide outstanding support and guidance, especially for those of you who find learning difficult.
- You have a very good headteacher and, together with staff and governors, he is working hard to help your school to keep on improving.

Here are some of the things we have asked the school to improve.

- Help you to improve your handwriting and presentation. You can help by always writing neatly and making sure your work is not messy.
- We saw some outstanding lessons and would like to see more of these so that your progress and attainment can improve even more.
- Make sure all of you concentrate in lessons and do not make too much noise. You should work hard at this too.

Yours sincerely

Diane Wilkinson

Lead inspector

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