

Crowcombe Church of England VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123830
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380740
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock HMI

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	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Harbour
Headteacher	Jennifer Yates
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2009
School address	Crowcombe Taunton TA4 4AA
Telephone number	01984 618273
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Introduction

The school is federated with Stogumber Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School. Separate inspection teams inspected the two schools simultaneously.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector observed eight lessons taught by four teachers. The inspector held discussions with groups of pupils, parents and carers and staff. Some joint meetings took place attended by the inspectors of both partner schools, including one held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other members. The inspector also held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. He analysed 30 questionnaire responses completed by parents and carers, as well as 26 responses pupils and seven from staff. The inspector viewed pupils' work and looked at a range of documentation including plans for improvement and policies such as the one on safeguarding. The school's breakfast club and after-school club were also visited.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which teaching consistently challenges pupils so that individuals achieve as well as they can.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum and wider opportunities, provided by the federation, in supporting pupils' learning.
- How well assessment information is used by leaders and managers, across the federation, to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- How effectively observations and assessments are used in the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan the next steps in children's learning.

Information about the school

This is a small school situated in the village of Crowcombe. The school has been federated with Stogumber Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School since September 2005. There is one headteacher and governing body for both schools. All pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be in receipt of free school meals is also below average. The teaching of pupils in Key Stage 2 is shared across the federation and some pupils travel between both schools for lessons on a daily basis. Those attending lessons at Crowcombe are taught in two mixed-age classes.

The school holds the International School award in recognition of its curriculum-based work. This accreditation has recently been renewed by the British Council.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Crowcombe Church of England Primary School is a satisfactory school. The school has successfully established a strong community ethos where each pupil is known as an individual. The close attention paid to pupils' well-being and their personal development has given rise to several good features. For example, the carefully planned programmes of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have ensured these pupils make good progress. Nevertheless, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory because the quality of teaching is not consistent enough to secure good progress in all lessons.

The high quality relationships between pupils and their good behaviour make a significant contribution to the caring and supportive atmosphere created by the staff. Pupils feel very safe in school and are confident they can approach staff with any concerns. These characteristics are confirmed by the vast majority of pupils, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Comments praising the 'happy and caring ethos' and the 'safe, clean, friendly environment' are representative of most parents and carers who returned the questionnaire and are similar to those of the inspector. Pupils confidently make healthy choices and demonstrate a well-developed understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Although they display a good level of independence, pupils should do more for themselves by playing a greater role in evaluating their work in lessons.

Children make good progress in their Reception Year because assessment information is increasingly well used to plan the next steps in their learning. In subsequent years, older pupils make satisfactory progress so that the attainment of those who leave school at the end of Year 6 is not significantly different to the average. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to good. Teaching is most effective when there is a balance of direct teaching and active pupil learning. In these lessons, teachers often demonstrate a confident knowledge of subjects and make good use of new technologies to explain important ideas. In some lessons, tasks are not sufficiently matched to pupils' needs and abilities and teachers talk for too long, which slows the pace of learning. While teachers' comments in books are often linked to pupils' targets, they do not provide sufficient guidance on how pupils can improve their work.

The federation partnership is making a strong contribution to the school's improvement. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are strongly committed to the school and ambitious for its success. The headteacher,

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ably assisted by other leaders from both federation schools, has successfully implemented new ways of working. For example, attendance has risen to be higher than the average because of the more rigorous approach that has been taken to managing absence. The improving picture for attendance and the difference that actions have made to the progress of the youngest children and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities demonstrate satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

The school's leaders have a realistic view of strengths and weaknesses, but occasionally the school's view of itself is overgenerous. This is because procedures for monitoring the school's work are not sufficiently systematic or rigorous. Information gathered through monitoring, including pupil tracking data, is not concisely summarised or used to set challenging targets for raising achievement. Plans for improvement identify both the monitoring responsibilities of the governing body and those of staff for evaluation but the school's ability to evaluate progress towards intended objectives is hampered because improvement priorities are not broken down into smaller steps or clearly linked to measurable outcomes.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, further improve the way in which the federation leaders and managers, including the governing body, apply their strategic role through:
 - a rigorous programme of monitoring activities for teaching and learning
 - setting challenging targets, shared with all staff, to ensure that all pupils achieve well
 - regularly evaluating the success of actions taken in relation to pupils' progress and their attainment.

- By July 2012, improve teaching and the use of assessment to support learning so that pupils make consistently good progress in lessons by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide crisp and clear explanations so that little learning time is wasted
 - improving marking so that teachers' comments in books guide pupils on how to improve their work
 - ensuring that tasks are more carefully matched to pupils' needs and abilities
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work against detailed criteria.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and investigation are evident in lessons. They work

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effectively with others and appreciate staff efforts to make learning fun. A notable example was seen in a music lesson for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4. In this lesson, pupils made good progress because of the crisp explanations from the class teacher and the skilful use of the interactive whiteboard which ensured that pupils listened intently and were actively learning for the whole of the lesson. Despite showing a generally good level of independence in lessons, pupils have few opportunities to evaluate their work to gain a better understanding of what is required. Those in need of additional support make good progress in lessons because of the proficient and responsive assistance that adults provide. There are no consistent differences in the rates of progress of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls and pupils with different prior attainment.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school such as during playtimes. They are thoughtful, polite and conscientiously carry out roles of responsibility such as setting up and clearing away for assemblies. Members of the school council meet regularly to canvas the opinions of others and to make suggestions on how the school could be improved. Pupils regularly participate in sports and community events, for example country dancing at local fairs. They speak knowledgeably about health related issues and participate enthusiastically in activities that promote an active lifestyle. For example, pupils start each day with a brisk, energetic routine and make good use of the equipment that promotes robust physical activity at playtimes.

Assemblies provide regular opportunities for pupils to consider important issues and participate in seasonal celebrations such as the Harvest Festival. Pupils talk knowledgeably of life in a different culture and what they have learned from having pen friends in Gambia. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are confident in raising concerns they may have with staff. Their above average attendance and satisfactory achievement mean they are adequately prepared for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' confident knowledge of subjects and the effective use of resources for pupils to learn by doing are strong features of teaching at the school. A notable example was observed in a Key Stage 2 lesson on tessellation. During the lesson, pupils manipulated plastic shapes to investigate the characteristics of regular polygons. The class teacher's incisive questions and clear explanations moved learning on at a brisk pace. Consequently, all pupils were challenged and made good progress. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and tasks do not take sufficient account of the needs and abilities of different pupils. On these occasions, time is wasted and the work fails to challenge all pupils. Although teachers' comments in books provide pupils with regular feedback, marking does not sufficiently guide pupils on how to improve their work.

The school's engaging curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' achievement across the federation, and this has been reflected in the school's receipt of an international award. Pupils from both schools regularly meet together to investigate a particular topic such as the environment. The federation partnership has substantially increased the range of enrichment activities and specialist teaching available to pupils such as the after-school club and participation in local sporting events. There are regular opportunities for pupils to grow and cook food which are central to their good understanding of a healthy diet. The established links with Gambia provide valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in cultural activities and learn about life in a different country.

Suitably trained and committed staff ensure that the well-being of pupils is given a high priority. Effective partnerships with other agencies have contributed to improvements in attendance. Pupils receive a good level of support when moving between the federation schools and when leaving for the local middle or secondary school. There are carefully planned programmes to assist those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers across the federation are increasingly playing their part in raising aspirations and changing the school for the better. For example, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader from Stogumber has worked closely with the teacher at Crowcombe to improve how assessment information is collected and used to plan learning activities for the youngest children. The school's close attention to individuals means that all have an equal opportunity to succeed and additional support is provided when progress slows. Partnership links make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and personal development, particularly through sports provision.

The way in which leaders and managers plan, monitor and evaluate the school's work is not as sharp as it should be. The arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching are not sufficiently robust to secure good learning in all lessons. Information on pupils' attainment and rates of progress is not routinely used to set challenging targets for individuals. Objectives in the school development plan do not clearly identify the anticipated difference actions will make on pupils' levels of achievement.

The governing body has recently undergone a change of leadership. Members of the governing body have specific roles of responsibility to keep them informed and ensure that statutory responsibilities are met. Although members undertake some monitoring of the school's work for themselves, the arrangements lack the necessary rigour to hold the school to account and support its future development. There are secure arrangements in place for keeping children safe such as checking the suitability of staff to work with children. Appropriate policies are in place and records are generally well maintained. The federation has a clear understanding of its context and has promoted community cohesion successfully in the local area. Pupils have regular opportunities to interact with other communities in the immediate locality and beyond.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and	3

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tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children’s levels of development when they join the school are similar to those found in other schools. However, this fluctuates each year reflecting the relatively small number of children in each year group. Children settle quickly as a result of the strong links with pre-school settings. Changes to the way observations and assessments are used have contributed to children’s good progress; another reason is the easy access children have to a rich outdoor environment that provides plenty of opportunities to make choices and do things for themselves.

Planned, purposeful activities often reflect children’s own interests and enable them to learn through direct teaching and through play. They quickly learn routines and build independence by watching the older pupils in their class. Timely interactions with adults promote curiosity and develop important communication skills.

Occasionally, opportunities are missed to fully utilise activities chosen by the children to teach the learning objective for the lesson. The breakfast and after-school clubs visited during the inspection meet welfare requirements and extend children’s learning.

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 considerably higher proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than seen nationally. The vast majority were very positive about the school’s work. The levels of agreement for nearly all statements were high. Several parents and carers also submitted similar written comments to the inspector. The school’s actions to ensure that pupils enjoy school, are kept safe and learn to make healthy choices were singled out for particular praise. The inspector’s judgements confirm these positive views.

There were no common themes arising from the few negative comments received

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from parents and carers. Nonetheless, these comments were brought to the school's attention and where appropriate, were explored during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Crowcombe Church of England VA 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 inspector received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 38 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	87	4	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	80	5	17	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	57	10	33	2	7	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	50	13	43	2	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	67	7	23	1	3	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	63	6	20	4	13	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	67	9	30	1	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)	19	63	8	27	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	60	9	30	2	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	53	12	40	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	60	9	30	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	19	63	7	23	2	7	2	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	70	8	27	1	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



30 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Crowcombe Church of England VA Primary School, Taunton
TA4 4AA**

Thank you for making me welcome when I came to inspect your school. I am very grateful to those of you who completed the questionnaire or who spoke with me. I would like to share with you what I have learned about your school.

Crowcombe Church of England Primary is a satisfactory school. This means that some things are going well, but there are things that could be better. Here are some of the best things about the school.

- Adults in the school take good care of you and support you in your learning.
- You feel very safe in school and have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- The youngest pupils and those who may need extra help make good progress.
- Your attendance has improved and is higher than in most schools.

I have asked your headteacher and teachers to help more of you make good progress in every lesson. They will do this by ensuring that all your lessons are as good as the best ones. Your teachers will ask you to think carefully about your work, and their comments in your books will tell you how you can improve. The work you are given will challenge you without being too difficult.

You can help your school get better by working hard and by taking the opportunities you are given to do more for yourselves. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

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