

Corfe Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113760
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	378750
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Sabben-Clare
Headteacher	Nigel Beckett
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2009
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were visited and five teachers were observed. Inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff with key responsibilities and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and evaluated documentation such as policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and records of their learning and progress, and the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 28 parents and carers, 16 members of staff and 26 pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- How well do children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress and how even is their attainment at the end of Reception?
- How consistently well do pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills across the school?
- What is pupils' attainment at the end of Year 4, including that of the current Year 4, and the impact of teaching and learning on raising attainment?
- How well do teaching and the curriculum consistently meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils in mixed-age classes?

Information about the school

This first school is below average in size. It draws its pupils from the local village and a wide rural area. Nearly all pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of these pupils have speech, language and/or literacy difficulties. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils who either join or leave the school other than at the normal times is slightly above average and high for the current Year 4. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a single age Reception class. The other two classes contain pupils of two age ranges.

From September 2012, as part of local reorganisation, the school will take Year 5 pupils and grow year on year until it becomes an all-through primary school in September 2013. The school holds a number of awards including Activemark and Healthy Schools. There is a pre-school on site but this is separately managed and was not included in this inspection.

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

This is a good school. Pupils flourish academically and personally and feel extremely safe. Pupils' attainment is rising and is now high in mathematics by the time they leave the school in Year 4. This reflects the good impact of initiatives to improve the quality of mathematics teaching and to involve parents and carers in helping their children at home. The good teaching, curriculum, and care, guidance and support all contribute to pupils' good behaviour and achievement. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Parents and carers are delighted with the school. One parent expressed the views of many in saying 'We have been thrilled with Corfe Castle First School. The headteacher is doing a wonderful job. We have every confidence in the standards of teaching.'

Pupils' progress is good overall and, by Year 4, pupils' attainment in reading and writing is above average. Overall attainment is even better in mathematics as more pupils reach higher levels for their age than in reading. Pupils' progress is consistently good for those in Reception and Years 2 and 4. However, in reading in other years, progress occasionally slows when pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their phonics skills (knowledge of letters and their sounds) to reading or writing.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and later entrants to the school are helped to quickly adjust so they do well. The school is vigilant about helping pupils from all backgrounds and has provided robust procedures for helping those who need to catch up. The impact is that very nearly all pupils reach at least the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school in Year 4.

The headteacher provides very good leadership. The focus on checking and developing teachers' work has led to much good teaching and learning. Good systems for involving pupils in assessing their own learning in English and mathematics motivate them and help them to take an active part in raising their achievement. The school has a strong focus on teaching the basic skills but, in a few writing lessons, there is not always enough direct teaching of reading, and, occasionally, lesson introductions are too hard for lower-attaining pupils. Demanding targets have been set for most pupils but Year 1 pupils' targets do not always build consistently on their attainment at the end of Reception. The school is already working to build greater continuity in children's learning across Reception and Year 1 and is aware that it has not yet done enough.

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The headteacher, subject leaders and governors use comprehensive and challenging systems for monitoring the work of the school. This has enabled them to have a clear understanding of performance and to accurately identify what needs to improve. The resulting actions have led to a rise in attainment in mathematics and in attendance since the previous inspection. Governors provide good challenge and hold the school to account for its performance. All this, together with the way teachers and support staff very effectively work together with shared high expectations, drive and ambition to improve pupils' achievement, confirms the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in reading to match mathematics by December 2012 by:
 - enabling all pupils to apply their phonics skills consistently to reading and writing
 - setting challenging targets for Year 1 pupils, especially for literacy, based on their attainment at the end of Reception.

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better so that all pupils make consistently good progress by July 2012 by:
 - strengthening the direct teaching of reading and consolidation of reading skills during writing lessons
 - ensuring teachers consistently make good use of their assessments to match closely all lesson activities, especially introductions, to the needs of lower-attaining pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils come to enjoy learning and develop the will to achieve because they feel very safe, lessons are interesting and excellent relationships provide a very positive framework for learning. Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment, having made good progress in Reception, although boys' attainment is still a little below average in phonics and writing. The strong emphasis given to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills throughout the school is an effective foundation for all their learning.

Lesson observations, the evaluation of tracking data related to pupils' progress and pupils' work showed learning is good overall. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn well in discrete phonics sessions when work in ability groups enables those who need extra challenge to work at higher levels and those who struggle to be taught with smaller learning steps. A good phonics lesson observed in Year 2 enabled more advanced pupils to quickly build on their previous skills. Good progress was also seen in a phonics lesson for lower- and average-attaining pupils for Year 1 when the content

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was skilfully matched to their previous learning. Pupils were given plenty of opportunities to practise and to apply their new sounds to simple reading and writing tasks. However, the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 3 is less consistent in the mixed-age class literacy lessons when they are not given enough opportunities to apply their phonics skills to reading and writing.

By the time pupils leave the school, there is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. The school’s rigorous assessment of pupils’ attainment and progress, and successful actions to address any underachievement, ensure that girls, boys and vulnerable pupils achieve equally well. Small group work in English and mathematics contributes to the good achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Computer-based reading activities, including self-assessment, help to accelerate pupils’ progress in reading. Several later entrants told inspectors how much they like school and how well their attainment was improving.

Support from the local church and strong links with the community help to create the school’s family atmosphere and pupils’ excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils like nature and, through studying art and design and technology around themes, such as ‘Space’, develop a sense of wonder in science and technology. The thriving school council is a good vehicle for enabling pupils to contribute to school decision making. They are keen to show how much they enjoy their responsibilities in helping to care for their environment through their eco-work. Visits from pupils of a London school help pupils towards a wider understanding of people from different cultures. Pupils’ good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles is reflected in the school’s national Healthy Schools award. The strong focus on good attendance is bringing results so that, for example, fewer families are taking their children away from school for holidays during term time. Attendance is now satisfactory and showing signs of improving. This, together with the extent to which pupils build up and apply their basic skills, prepares them well for the future.

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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations for behaviour. Whiteboard technology and practical resources are successfully used to make lessons interesting. Teachers' good subject knowledge was seen in a good mathematics lesson in Years 3 and 4 which promoted problem solving as pupils searched for patterns and mathematical rules related to 'building' staircases. The problem was adapted well for the needs of different abilities and, as a result, all pupils developed their thinking well. Assessment is accurate and teachers use it well to ensure that group work is carefully tailored to the wide range of abilities in the mixed-age classes. However, on occasions, lesson introductions are not always fully adjusted to meet pupils' needs, including the consolidation and teaching of key reading skills to the lower-attaining pupils. Support staff are skilfully deployed to ensure pupils' wide range of attainment can be addressed during group work.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide array of activities, including in art, design and technology, and sport. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support pupils' learning. Carefully chosen visitors and visits enliven pupils' learning, including a recent visit from a travelling planetarium. Strong partnerships with other schools in the local cluster enrich pupils' learning opportunities, such as in sport. The deployment of the cluster's peripatetic mathematics support teacher has enhanced teachers' subject knowledge as well as pupils' learning.

Pupils work and play in a safe, secure and welcoming environment where they know that they are valued as individuals and that their views count. Good partnerships with parents and carers contribute to pupils' excellent feelings of personal safety and security as well as to their good learning. Close pre-school links on site and elsewhere are very effective in helping Reception children to settle. Exceedingly good support also helps later entrants to the school to adjust very quickly. The school works effectively to support and include pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. It draws upon its good links with outside specialists to help these pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example pupils with speech and language difficulties. Rigorous procedures for ensuring good attendance are beginning to have an impact for a small number of pupils whose poorer attendance was limiting their progress in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clarity of vision, drive, enthusiasm and commitment to improvement are recognised and strongly supported by staff, governors, pupils, and parents and carers. There are clear systems and structures for managing the school and senior leaders work closely together to maintain, improve and check provision. Robust systems for tracking and analysing pupils' attainment and progress involve all teaching staff. Demanding attainment targets have been set for most years but are not always challenging enough for Year 1, given their attainment at the end of Reception. In this small school where all staff have many responsibilities, staff are empowered to play a full part in raising achievement. The governing body is well organised, provides good support and is knowledgeable and well informed, including about achievement matters. It has ensured that the premises are very well maintained and, together with senior staff, is carefully planning ahead for the school's increase in size.

The school prioritises working with parents and carers, consults them on school development matters and keeps them well informed about their children's achievement and well-being, and how they can help their children to achieve their best. Safeguarding arrangements are good and well established in policies, working practices and the ethos of the school. Checks on staff are up-to-date and secure, and there are well-managed systems for child protection, health and safety. This is affirmed by the high degree of endorsement from parents and carers in the questionnaires returned and pupils' unequivocal view that they feel safe.

The school is vigilant in tackling discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity well. Pupils' excellent social development is shown in their respect for each other. Different groups achieve equally well, although the school recognises that further work is required to develop the consistency of progress in reading. The school shows a strong commitment to promoting community cohesion. It contributes much to the life of the local area, working with various sections of the community. Links with schools in other parts of the world are developing, and good links with a London school give pupils a good understanding of communities and cultures further afield.

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

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

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter with a wide range of skills and knowledge but, overall, they are a little below those expected for their age, especially boys in communication, language and literacy. Children make good progress in all areas of their learning. Very positive relationships ensure children feel safe and secure. Staff’s strong focus on developing children’s language and personal skills enables all children to make a good start, including those who enter with much lower communication skills than expected. More-able children are quickly identified and provided with challenging learning opportunities. Teaching and learning are good and occasionally excellent in early reading and phonics. In an outstanding language and literacy session, children were carefully grouped by prior attainment. Very well organised and interesting activities enabled them to quickly learn and apply new sounds to early reading and writing tasks and practical activities. Children greatly enjoy learning phonics and making the actions that represent sounds. However, when the whole class is gathered together, the activities proceed a little too quickly for lower-attaining children. The staff work closely together and ensure there is a good balance between activities directed by the adults and those chosen by the children. The outside area is used well and contains good learning opportunities across all areas. The ‘Story Tree’ and the ‘Story Box’ really engage children’s interest in stories and acting them out. Children’s creativity is well promoted through role play, painting and model making. The provision is well led. Assessment is thorough and carefully analysed to check the impact of provision on children’s progress in order to make improvements.

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

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Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents or carers who returned the questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team were overwhelmingly positive about the school and its impact on their children's learning and well-being. They are very pleased with the way the school is led and managed. They feel their children are kept very safe and their children really enjoy school and make good progress. Additional comments included: appreciation for the way children mix across the year groups and are able to make friends with children of different ages; and appreciation for the school's work on involving parents and carers in home learning. Their views reflect inspection findings. Very few parents and carers expressed concerns and there were no common themes.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Corfe Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled First 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 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 65 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	68	8	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	61	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	15	54	12	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	50	14	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	68	8	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	18	64	10	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	61	11	39	0	0	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)	17	61	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	57	10	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	54	12	43	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	54	13	46	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	71	8	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	20	71	8	29	0	0	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.



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Corfe Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Corfe Castle, Wareham BH20 5EE

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed finding out about the interesting things you do. This letter is to tell you what we found on our inspection.

First, you need to know your school is a good one. Here are some of the many things your school does well.

- Those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start.
- You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and your attainment is high in mathematics and above average in reading and writing by the end of Year 4.
- You make your school a special place because you are good learners, are friendly, work hard and behave extremely well.
- You have many exciting learning opportunities, including in ICT, art, design and technology, and sport, as well as for visits and visitors. For example, you told us how much you enjoyed the planetarium.
- Your teachers are good at making your lessons interesting.
- Staff take very good care of you and you told us how extremely safe you feel.
- Your headteacher leads you all very well and all the staff and governors think very carefully about what is best for you.

This is what we are asking your school to do to improve.

- Make sure you all reach as high standards in reading as in mathematics by helping you to always use your phonic skills in your reading and writing, and always setting you challenging targets
- Help your teachers to always plan activities for you all that build on what you already know and to concentrate more on developing your reading skills.

We hope all of you will continue to enjoy school and carry on working hard in all you do. Well done for doing so much for the community. Please keep this up!

Yours sincerely
Eileen Chadwick
Lead inspector

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