



Stower Provost Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113674
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279217
Inspection dates 9 May 2006 to 9 May 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Burghart AI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Woodville Stour Provost |
| School category | Community | | Gillingham |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 | | Dorset SP8 5LX |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01747 838370 |
| Number on roll | 111 | Fax number | 01747 838083 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Vernon Christopher |
| Date of previous inspection | 14 January 2002 | Headteacher | Miss Sue Cook |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average rural primary school where virtually all pupils are of White British background. Numbers have declined over the past three years but now seemed to have stabilised. Pupils are taught in mixed age and ability classes but there are times when they are taught in separate age groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. The attainment of children when they first join Reception varies between year groups but is generally about what is expected at this age.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school has done particularly well to overcome the serious weaknesses identified in the previous two inspection reports. Significant improvements mean that the school now provides a satisfactory standard of education. With established good leadership and management, good use of assessment, good provision for pupils with learning difficulties, and rising standards, Stower Provost is well on the way to becoming a good school. The growing success of recent initiatives since the headteacher was appointed shows that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. Children make a sound start in Reception, where provision and standards are satisfactory, and continue their steady progress throughout the school. In the last year, pupils in Year 6 have made rapid progress to reach above average standards by the time they leave. This is a considerable achievement and a good omen for the future. However, standards and pupils' achievement in the rest of the school are still broadly average. Some more capable pupils have not always been sufficiently challenged, and, although improving, writing remains an area for development. Apart from being a little cautious over its own judgement of leadership, management and teaching (each of which has been recently improved by much better monitoring and evaluation), the school has an accurate and realistic view of its own performance. The school's self-evaluation is good and matches the findings of the inspection. Planned improvements are supported by high expectations and a determination to succeed. Despite the restrictions of a falling roll on the budget, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that more capable pupils are challenged effectively to achieve as well as they should
- improve the quality of pupils' writing, providing more opportunities for extended writing to develop standards of spelling, handwriting and sentence construction

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception to achieve most of what is expected of them by Year 1 and this progress continues throughout the school. Those pupils with learning difficulties achieve well and make good progress. Significant and rapid progress since the headteacher was appointed has resulted in pupils reaching challenging targets with standards rising to now being above average at the end of Year 6. There are strengths in mathematics and science. Standards in other year groups are still average. However, work has not been exacting enough and more capable pupils should have achieved more, for example, by the end of Year 2, and in English at the end of Year 6. There are weaknesses in all classes in spelling, sentence construction, handwriting and vocabulary. The school has correctly identified that there are too few opportunities

for pupils to write to record and explain their ideas in subjects other than English. Pupils' achievement and standards are rising because of much improved, and now good, use of data to analyse and track pupils' performance. The future looks bright.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They are responding well to new initiatives in the curriculum and to the policies for behaviour and assessment. As a result, pupils' attitudes are good. They are proud of their school and enjoy most lessons and activities. Standards of behaviour are good. Attendance is above average. Pupils work at a good pace and co-operate well with others. They are polite and are careful to adopt safe practices, for example when using computers. They join in charitable fundraising and their awareness of economic issues is sound. Pupils are making successful efforts to be healthy in response to learning about diet and exercise. Everyone, staff and pupils, joins in 'wake up and shake up' enthusiastically. Pupils' cultural and moral development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Awareness of local culture is good whilst multicultural development is sound. As pupils grow older, they take on more responsibilities for aspects of school life. For instance, Year 5 pupils monitor behaviour at lunchtimes and help to run activities for the youngest pupils each Friday afternoon. The school council makes a very good contribution to the life of the school, for instance in sounding out the views of pupils on important issues regarding their rights and responsibilities. In a good profile of personal development, an area for further improvement is to encourage pupils to become more confident when working independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This is the result of the school's new, effective system of professional development, good planning and good assessment procedures which identify pupils' potential. However, despite good teaching, pupils' achievement is satisfactory rather than good because initiatives have not yet been in place long enough to have had full effect. Evidence of success to date is in the significant improvement in standards achieved by Year 6 pupils following a big 'push' to develop teaching techniques in the last year. Teachers and teaching assistants are good at involving all pupils in all activities and using questioning to prompt them to explain how they arrived at their answers. Relationships are good and there is strong mutual trust between pupils and teachers. Improved planning takes into account ways of making learning more enjoyable while challenging pupils to do their best: for example Year 2 money games, brought squeals of delight, and Year 5 and 6 work on Roman measuring generated considerable interest. Pupils with learning difficulties are well taught. What they need to do to improve is made very clear. Close support from teaching assistants effectively helps such pupils in class and in group work. The school has already

identified that the most important aspects of teaching to work on are continuing to raise expectations and offering better opportunities for extended writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and follows national guidance for Reception and Years 1 to 6. It is carefully planned to avoid repetition in mixed age classes. There are good opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology and to carry out scientific investigations. Good use is made of special interest weeks, such as the recent study of Travellers, to widen pupils' experience. Classwork is appropriately adjusted to support those with learning difficulties. Individual education plans are well focused, with regularly reviewed targets. Planning for the most able, although improved, is not yet fully effective. There is a need to develop writing across the curriculum. There is a good range of after-class activities. These are well attended and much enjoyed by a high proportion of pupils. Sport is particularly well represented and parents give good support. School teams perform well in area competitions. The school has good links with its neighbouring schools which have enhanced the curriculum through joint planning and evaluation. Good links with the community make a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for, supported and guided. They say that they feel safe, knowing whom to turn to if necessary. Health and safety procedures are effective. Staff know pupils well and develop warm relationships with them. Pupils feel confident that they will be listened to and are shown that they can learn even from mistakes. Child protection procedures are effective and well understood. There are sound procedures for dealing with the few incidents of bullying that occur. Activities in class are sensitively varied so that pupils with learning difficulties are given equal opportunities. Strong teamwork between teachers and assistants ensures that pupils having problems in lessons are given the help they need. There has been good improvement in assessment procedures, particularly in the tracking of pupils' performance year on year. Pupils are given good guidance in how to improve their work. Staff are trying out new approaches to marking and involving pupils in the assessment process. The strong staff commitment to such developments is having a good effect on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made substantial progress in developing leadership and management since it was found to have serious weaknesses in these areas in 2002 and 2004. It is now well run, led and managed and, as a result, standards are rising. The headteacher shows outstanding awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and plans very

effectively to turn her vision into practice. The new leadership team promises much and already has a significant impact on school development. Governance is now good, with governors playing an effective part in supporting and managing the school. Their involvement in monitoring pupils' progress, staffing appointments and financial control are all positive features. Governors have managed the budget well despite reductions caused by a drop in pupil numbers. Changes in staffing mean that new subject leaders have not had time to take full responsibility for monitoring how well pupils are challenged. However, the undoubtedly successful management of assessment and the significant improvements to the school's self-evaluation, which is now good, are proof that the school is well placed to move forward. There are good procedures which make use of the views of staff, governors and parents to create the good plan for the school's development. Parents have positive views, particularly about how well the school is led, how communication is managed and how well Stower Provost helps their children to develop as people. 'A little school that achieves a lot' was a notable comment.

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Inspection judgements

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 3 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | NA |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | NA |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | NA |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | NA |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | NA |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils, We would like to thank you for your friendly welcome and help during the inspection, especially those of you on the school council who were very helpful. You showed that you are well behaved and polite. We can see that the school takes good care of you and is helping you to be, as teachers put it, 'a rights respectful school'. Your work shows that you are well taught and that you are making steady progress. It is good to hear that most of you enjoy learning and like coming to school. Standards are above average for Year 6 pupils but they are not as good as this in other year groups because some pupils have not done quite as well as they should. We have asked teachers to make sure that this doesn't happen and to help you improve your writing because standards are below what they should be. You can help by taking more care with your handwriting, using the dictionary and thinking before you write. Stower Provost is improving fast. It is now what adults call 'satisfactory', but is well on the way to becoming a good school. This is because it is being well run. The headteacher, governors and staff are good at deciding what will make things better and then doing something about it. We wish you and the school all the best for the future. Yours sincerely, Mike Burghart Lead Inspector