



St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Child Okeford

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113796
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279251
Inspection dates 22 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Diane Wilkinson AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Station Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Child Okeford
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 8EL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01258 860581
Number on roll	101	Fax number	01258 860581
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Lady Maryanna Tavener
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs S Marsh

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small village school of four classes, most of which have more than one year group. The school is popular and pupils come from a wide area and a range of backgrounds. Very few come from minority ethnic groups and all speak English fluently. Standards on entry to Reception are broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently above average, although this varies significantly between year groups. The school holds the Sportsmark Gold and Healthy Schools Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Nicholas Primary School is a good and improving school with outstanding features in some aspects of its work. This agrees with the school's view of itself. Since the last inspection, school development has been hampered by significant staff changes and absences which slowed progress in some classes, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and contributed to weaknesses in boys' writing. Despite this, the exceptional quality of the school's evaluation of its work and an accurate analysis of how to improve, together with outstanding leadership by the headteacher, has meant the school has improved well and standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. It gives good value for money. Very good strategic appointments of new staff and the firm commitment of the whole school community to strive for the very best quality learning means the school is exceptionally well placed to improve further.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and behaviour and relationships are excellent. The school is a very happy and safe place to be. Staff enjoy working there and are committed to doing their best for pupils. Pupils love school and their good progress is effectively supported by consistently good teaching and a rich and interesting curriculum. Pupils are exceptionally well involved in all aspects of school life and are increasingly helping to check on their own progress which is inspiring them to do even better. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are good.

The school has an outstanding partnership with parents and the local community. For example, together they have raised two thirds of the funding for accommodation to house the local playgroup and Reception class to ensure children have a consistent approach in developing their early learning skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress made by Year 1 and 2 pupils.
- Improve the quality of boys' writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Standards by the end of Year 6 have risen well since the last inspection. The school reaches the challenging targets it has set and this year a good number of pupils exceeded their personal targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support and make the same good progress as their classmates. Due to outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6, some of these pupils achieve very well.

Reception children make good progress because of effective teaching. Nearly all reach the standards expected by the time they enter Year 1 and exceed them in mathematics. The progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 has been hampered by a number of staff absences and changes and is satisfactory overall. Last year, a significant minority of pupils, particularly the boys, did not make enough progress in writing. The school has

acted swiftly to address this issue. This year, all pupils, including boys, have made at least satisfactory progress in writing and there is no underachievement. Standards in English and mathematics are average. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good progress overall and very good progress in the Year 5/6 class where teaching is outstanding. Standards are better than in most schools, especially in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Children are given a very good start in Reception so they get on well with each other and become enthusiastic about learning. Pupils' 'Recipe for a happy school' describes it as one where there are 'smiling children who work hard', and this has been achieved. Children love school and their teachers and classroom assistants who, they say, 'help you if you're stuck'. Pupils' very positive attitudes help ensure good attendance and good progress. Relationships and behaviour are outstanding. From the youngest class, pupils willingly accept responsibility and older pupils help care for younger ones. Spiritual development is excellent as the result of the many opportunities for reflection in the high quality assemblies and very effective links with the local church. Cultural development is very good because pupils have access to high quality activities in art and music and the school places an effective emphasis on learning about other cultures.

Pupils feel very safe and say adults will help them if they are hurt or upset. The very effective personal, social and health education programme means pupils are excellent at helping to secure their own health and safety. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. Through the work of the school council, pupils are very involved in helping to improve school life and organise extensive fund raising, including for third world countries. Pupils develop a good range of skills to help them in future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. It is rapidly improving and some is outstanding. The school's commitment to provide well for each pupil is now being realised. In particular, very good diagnoses of the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means they are well provided for. As a result, all pupils are now making good progress throughout the school. In the past, the significant number of staff changes and absences limited pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The school has made very good arrangements to address the weaknesses. Writing is now better taught and is beginning to improve progress, although the school recognises there is still more to do.

Very effective planning of lessons ensures challenging work and targets are set for pupils, matched well to their abilities. Teachers explain things very well and make sure pupils understand what they are learning and what they need to do next. Classroom assistants support learning very well, particularly for pupils who find learning difficult. Throughout lessons, continual checking of how well pupils are doing encourages progress. Parents' support for the work their children do at home is very good. Where teaching is of the highest quality, all adults and pupils engage frequently in discussions about how best to tackle work and this ensures pupils do the very best they can.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the varying needs of all pupils. Reception children make a good start and staff ensure that as many opportunities as possible are offered to help develop the whole child. This is built on throughout the school and pupils have opportunities both within and outside the classroom to develop their mental, physical, emotional and social skills. The school's current focus on writing is beginning to improve boys' performance, although the school recognises the strategies need to be consolidated and enhanced.

Basic skills are reinforced in all subjects, for example, by encouraging pupils to write creatively and ensuring spelling is accurate in mathematics and science. Well chosen activities in all subjects, which are especially good in art and music, motivate pupils and inspire them to do well. An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, some of which are organised by local residents, further enriches pupils' learning. For example, pupils learn French and are very keen to speak it.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall and outstanding for pupils' personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about this aspect of the school's work. One parent described it as 'a friendly, caring and loving environment where children's quest for knowledge is nurtured'. Pupils feel very happy and safe in school. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are well implemented and pupils speak very highly of the school's support when they have problems. Classroom assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which helps their good achievement.

Guidance and support for pupils' academic development are good overall and are rapidly improving in Years 1 and 2 because of more effective teaching. Pupils increasingly know what they have to do to improve and are beginning to assess their own and their classmates' progress which further motivates them to do well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives outstanding leadership and clear direction to maintain the school's momentum of improvement. She has been instrumental in ensuring the school has continued to improve despite staff disruptions. She has the highest expectations of the pupils, and the firm commitment of staff and governors in working closely with her to ensure a happy and secure environment for each child. As a result, pupils' experience of learning is consistently good. The assistant headteacher gives very good support and subject coordinators are beginning to help drive improvement. Pupils, who are courteous and helpful, emulate adults who consistently set a good example.

The school takes exceptionally good account of parents' views and its partnership with parents and the local community is outstanding. It works very well with a number of other agencies. These strengths make a very positive contribution to pupils' education.

The school's understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and how to improve is outstanding. Very effective tracking of pupils' progress, together with high quality analyses of data, allow the school to pinpoint exactly where improvement is needed. Effective strategies are put in place to improve weaknesses and both staff and governors are successfully involved in monitoring progress. The determination and commitment of the whole school community has led to good improvement in the standard of boys' writing and the rate of progress in Years 1 and 2, and a resolve to do even better, which ensures the school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Governance is good. Through their regular visits and links with year groups, governors know the school well, effectively challenging senior managers in order to continue making improvements.

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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
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	2	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	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the special group and the school council who gave up their time to talk with me. You and your parents think your school is a very happy and safe place to be and that you do well there. We agree with you.

What we found your school does well:

- You enjoy school very much and your behaviour is excellent.
- You are very kind and helpful to each other and, through your school council, you are working very hard to help your school improve.
- You have an excellent headteacher and all the staff, governors, your parents and people in the village are working well together to help the school get even better.
- The activities teachers plan for you are good and they teach you well so you make good progress.
- All adults take good care of you.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Carry on helping you to learn even faster, particularly pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Help you to get better in your writing, particularly the boys.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.