



Piddle Valley Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113811
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279254
Inspection dates 22 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector Deborah Zachary RISP

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

Type of school	First	School address	Piddletrenthide
School category	Voluntary aided		Dorchester
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Dorset DT2 7QL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01300 348219
Number on roll	78	Fax number	01300 348887
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J. A. Neades
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Carole McCormack

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 22 November 2005 - 22 November 2005	Inspection number 279254
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Piddle Valley is a small village school. The majority of pupils come from the village or close by, but a large minority travel from outside the catchment area. The area is comparatively advantaged, but pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. A significant number of these pupils have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Almost all the pupils are white, and none speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be good and inspectors agree. It is well led, and good improvements have been made on the key issues identified at the time of the last inspection. The school gives good value for money and has the capacity to improve further.

The provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage (the Reception Year) is outstanding and results in them making excellent progress in this first year at the school. Pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. They are given a breadth of rich and relevant experiences and really enjoy their education – indeed, those interviewed said they wanted to change nothing about their school. They are very aware of how well they are learning and are closely involved in identifying what they need to learn next.

Progress is monitored closely and is now good, in response to good teaching. It dipped in some year groups between 2003 and 2005 because of the illness of teachers, but the school has taken strong action to help those affected to catch up, particularly in reading. Pupils in Year 4 still have some ground to make up in mathematics. Whilst this has been recognised by the school, the extent of the progress needed – the levels that the pupils should be aiming for by next summer – has not yet been identified.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils currently in Year 4 make up lost ground in mathematics.
- Formally identify the levels that individual pupils in Year 4 should be reaching by the time they leave.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Each year group is small so the standards pupils have when they start the school vary greatly from year to year – in recent years from broadly average to extremely low. Standards pupils reach at school also vary, but are broadly average. They make excellent progress in Reception and, despite recent fluctuations, are now making good progress in the rest of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress and the school has good expertise in helping those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have well-understood and appropriate short-term targets.

The pupils in last year's Year 2 and Year 4 experienced disruption to their progress due to teachers' illness in 2003-4 and 2004-5 respectively. These pupils underachieved during those years, especially in reading, but very good progress in previous and subsequent years meant that their achievement through the school was broadly satisfactory. The current Year 4 pupils underachieved in mathematics last year, for the same reason. The school realises that its most able pupils in particular have ground to make up, but it has not yet identified what standards to expect from each individual

by next summer. This is important to support teachers in planning work of a high enough level to ensure rapid progress.

Apart from in the current Year 4, standards in mathematics have been much higher than in reading for several years. Mathematics remains a strength in most year groups. However, progress in reading has now accelerated at an exceptional pace as a result of actions taken over the last year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding, with an exceptionally good focus on this aspect from the moment they start school in the Reception class. Pupils enjoy school very much, and the learning skills they are developing - particularly the ability to reflect and plan - are a very good preparation for the future. Through the very effective programme for personal, social and health education, pupils develop an excellent awareness of how to secure their own health and safety and staff continually remind them of the importance of this. Attendance is satisfactory and by the time pupils leave, they are confident and self-assured.

The consistent approach by staff to behaviour management reflects high expectations and a supportive environment and helps ensure all pupils behave well, including those with specific behavioural needs. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. The 'buddy' system, where older pupils help younger ones, is highly effective in developing responsibility. Pupils play an important part in helping to run the school, for example in improving activities for wet playtimes through the school council. Pupils' involvement in the local community is also excellent. They welcome visitors and are very interested and well informed about the current flood alleviation scheme for the Piddle Valley.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' plans identify learning objectives which are shared with the pupils as 'What we are learning today'. At the end of the lesson, pupils often review how well they have met their objective, awarding themselves a colour from the traffic lights system - very often green. They are confident that they know what they are trying to do and that their teachers will help. The learning objectives are most effective when they are slightly different for pupils at different stages in their learning. Occasionally, where this is not the case, the more able could move on more quickly than they do.

Pupils receive an excellent start to their learning in Reception, where teaching is outstanding. The learning environment is first class, with every opportunity taken to promote learning skills and spoken language. The result is very high quality discussion

and huge involvement, enthusiasm and progress. Teaching assistants play a big part here and in other classes. Many are particularly skilled in supporting the learning of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The well-planned curriculum meets the needs and interests of individual pupils extremely well. Staff are well aware of developments in the wider world of education, and pupils are given a breadth of rich and relevant experiences which motivate them very well and underpin the excellent attitudes they have to school. The curriculum for pupils in the Reception class is exceptionally well planned, with particularly good links being made between different areas of learning. Very good use is made of the attractive accommodation to provide pupils with a high quality learning environment, with evidence of excellent work in art enhancing corridors and work areas. Pupils very much like the excellent opportunities to attend after-school clubs and take part in local sports competitions. Teachers give pupils opportunities to use literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' needs and interests are at the heart of the school's work. Their security, safety and well-being are of paramount importance and very effective systems help to achieve this throughout the school.

Pupils report that staff help them to do their best, help them to feel positive even when they get something wrong and give them good advice on how to do better. Excellent support is given to help pupils develop self-esteem and confidence, for instance through 'nurture groups'. Very good awareness of their specific needs ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. Learning conferences help pupils to recognise how well they are doing and identify what they need to do to improve. A comparatively recent initiative, they are increasingly having a very positive effect on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's leadership is very good. She is well supported by the acting assistant head and head of Early Years, and there is a strong sense of teamwork at all levels in the school. Though the school's improvement has been restricted by the illness of key staff, what has been possible has been done. Self-evaluation draws effectively on views of staff, parents and governors, and is also well informed by accurate analysis of data about the pupils' performance. It is very accurate in what is identified but occasionally too modest, as in its evaluation of pupils' personal development and the curriculum. However, this is a reflection of a determination to seek the very best from

and for the pupils. Governance is good, and the chair of governors understands the school's strengths and weaknesses well.

The school improvement plan identifies the right areas for development. Chief among these has been improvement of reading. A very well planned programme, starting with a wide-ranging audit of provision, has had a huge impact in raising reading ages over the last six to nine months. Assessment and tracking have been greatly improved since the last inspection, together with the identification of and provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has a very good capacity to improve.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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?	1	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	2	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

Piddletrenthide Dorchester DT2 7QL

23 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. You told us how much you like your school – some of you said you didn't want to change anything at all about it. We think you are lucky to be at such a good school.

These are some of the things we especially liked:

- So many of you have done very well in reading this term.
- You care for each other and help each other very well, for example as Buddies.
- The teaching is good and you are given very interesting things to do and learn.
- You are very good at thinking about what you are going to learn and deciding if you have got there.
- The youngest pupils get a wonderful start to school in the Reception class.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are working very hard to make the school even better.

We think this should be worked on next:

- Those of you in Year 4 need to move on quickly in your maths this year.

With best wishes

Deborah Zachary Lead Inspector