



Sandford St Martin's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113818
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279257
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector David Clegg AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Sandford
School category	Voluntary aided		Wareham
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Dorset BH20 7AJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01929 552949
Number on roll	256	Fax number	01929 552949
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jack Haworth
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2000	Headteacher	Mr Damien Hewitt

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 1 February 2006 - 2 February 2006	Inspection number 279257
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Sandford St Martin's is a large first school catering for pupils aged 4 to 9. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and all pupils speak English fluently. There is a below average proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals. In the last two years the school has appointed a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. Children enter the school with standards in line with those usually found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education and gives satisfactory value for money. It has some good features, particularly in how well it provides for pupils' personal development. The school's main strengths and weaknesses are as follows:

- The headteacher knows the school very well and has an accurate view of its effectiveness. This sharp grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses is used well to identify what needs to improve. However, information about pupils' progress is not used enough to check if the improvements have worked. Currently, too much of the work of checking up on how the school is doing is carried out by the headteacher.
- Children make a good start in the Reception classes. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Many attain better than expected standards by the time they start Year 1.
- Satisfactory teaching helps pupils to make steady progress in Years 1 to 4. The standards pupils reach in reading, writing and mathematics are generally above average. A small number of lessons are insufficiently demanding and expectations of how much pupils are capable of learning are not always high enough.
- The high priority the school gives to pupils' personal development and welfare results in pupils being well prepared and equipped for the next stage of their learning.
- The school has successfully addressed the issues in the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further.
- Parents and pupils have enormous confidence in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all lessons move on at a brisk pace and that expectations of what all pupils can achieve are consistently high.
- Use information about how well pupils are doing to check that new initiatives are producing benefits.
- Make sure all senior managers play a full part in checking on the school's effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. As they move through the school, variations in the quality of teaching results in differing rates of progress, although it is never less than satisfactory. Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes and achieve well. They start school with standards that are similar to those usually found. When they start Year 1 almost all children have reached the standards expected for their age and many exceed them. Progress in Years 1 to 4 is steady so that by the time pupils leave, they have maintained the above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There is a good track record of pupils reaching above average standards at the end of Year 2, although in the most recent national assessments results were similar to the national average rather than above. This dip in the results was due to the variations between different year groups rather than the result of any change in the quality of the school's provision. Throughout the school the majority of pupils meet their targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from the support they receive and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is a good aspect of the school. Pupils behave well and enjoy school. Attendance is above average and they work hard. They are very positive about their lessons. Parents also see pupils' personal development as a strong feature of the school. This was evident through many positive comments, for example, 'my daughter has gained confidence and come on well with her learning'. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and the oldest pupils are well prepared for the next stage of learning. They also have a good sense of how to stay healthy. They feel safe and secure, follow safe practices, and have confidence in the adults; as one little boy said 'we know what to do if there is a fire'. Relationships at all levels are constructive. Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are successfully encouraged to make a positive contribution to the community. They are involved in several worthwhile activities such as the local carnival and the town band. This good level of involvement is reflected in the comments from one parent. The school '...is so much more than a school. It is a vital focal point in the community'. Pupils successfully develop a range of personal and academic skills that will help them later in life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching ensures that pupils make generally steady progress as they move through the school. The rate of pupils' progress varies occasionally due to differences in the quality of teaching across Years 1 to 4. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Where teaching is brisk and confident, learning moves on at a good pace. The expectations are high and the pace of the work stretches all pupils. In a small number of lessons, the level of challenge for pupils and the teachers' expectations are not high enough particularly about the pace of pupils' learning. The consistently good teaching that meets the needs of all children, and efficient organisation in the Reception classes, help to ensure that children get off to a good start. Teachers' marking does not consistently make reference to individual targets or to what pupils need to do to improve. There is effective marking for the younger pupils who are given some good ideas about how they can improve. However, the inconsistencies are more apparent between Years 3 and 4. In the latter, marking is often constructive and helpful. This inconsistency is a feature of the teaching that could be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. The range of activities offered to pupils is satisfactory and meets all the requirements. There are a number of clubs run at lunchtimes which include art, music and information and

communication technology (ICT). These, together with the residential trips, theatre visits and outings successfully extend pupils' experiences. A good feature of the curriculum is the high priority given to pupils' personal and social development. This is taught through a clear programme that includes aspects of citizenship. Other good aspects of the curriculum include the encouragement given to pupils to think about how they are behaving and how they might respond to others. There is a keen emphasis on giving pupils responsibilities. This is evident through for example, the school council, although confining the membership of the school council to Years 3 and 4 is limiting the benefit that might be gained by the younger pupils. The use of 'classroom monitors' and 'playground buddies' is also testament to the school's desire to give pupils responsibilities and play an active part in how the school operates.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good level of care and support. Measures to ensure pupils' safety, including child protection arrangements, are secure. Key members of staff receive regular training in how to deal with any potentially vulnerable pupils. Good checks are made on how well individual pupils are doing. There are regular assessments and these help to identify any pupils who may need extra support or help. The regular assessments also result in some adjustments to pupils' own targets. Not all pupils are aware of their targets. Consequently not all pupils are deriving as much benefit as they could from knowing what they have to do to make significant progress. Those pupils who do know their targets are very positive about how they help them to learn.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership team is characterised by their enthusiasm and clarity. The headteacher instils a strong sense of purpose and his infectious optimism forges a good team spirit. As one parent wrote, 'his enthusiasm and passion rubs off on everybody'. Other key managers are beginning to play their part although currently, the headteacher is doing too much of the checking up on how things are going. There is a need to build more leadership and management capacity throughout the school. Where there is well established leadership it is effective. This is evident in the efficient way the reception classes are led and organised and is a key factor in the successful start made by children. The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Building on this evaluation, a number of new, sensible changes have been put in place to address areas that need improvement. However, there is not enough attention given to establishing the success, or otherwise, of the changes. For example, there has been no systematic evaluation of the impact of the changes to how reading is taught. This lack of attention to evaluating the results is a weak aspect of the school's systems for checking on its own effectiveness. The school regularly seeks the views of parents and takes their comments and suggestions seriously. The school benefits from the good links with other organisations. These

include being involved in training new teachers as well working closely with partner schools on particular aspects of learning such as problem solving.

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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?	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	3	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	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	3	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 School Council Thank you for having us with you at your school. We enjoyed being with you and found you all very friendly and happy to chat with us about all sorts of things. This letter is to tell you about what we found out about your school while we were with you. What we found that the school does well:

- You all behave well and are caring towards each other, especially at playtimes when you help other children who are feeling a bit lonely or have been hurt.
- The school is good at helping you to get on with others and grow up.
- Those of you who are in the reception classes are making good progress in all your work.
- You enjoy coming to school and arrive in good time.
- You are all learning a lot about how to keep safe and stay healthy.
- Your parents are very supportive about what the school does for you.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure that all your lessons help you all to learn as much as possible.
- Check to make sure that some changes to how you are taught are working well.
- Get more teachers involved in checking up on how well the school is doing.

We wish you all the best for the future and thanks again for making us feel so welcome in your school. Yours sincerely David Clegg (Lead Inspector)