



The Abbey CE VA Primary School, Shaftesbury

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113850
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279263
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Walsh AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St James's Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Shaftesbury
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Dorset SP7 8HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01747 852620
Number on roll	166	Fax number	01747 854122
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs SV Hinshaw
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Miss E Scott

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School has recently changed from a first school to a medium-sized primary school. This has involved extensive building work which, although now completed, has caused considerable disruption to the school's work. Most pupils come from the immediate locality and are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is low and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. The school has strong links with other local primary schools through the Primary Strategy Learning Network and has achieved Active mark for sports.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school that provides satisfactory value for money. This is also the school's view of itself. The future looks bright. The building work has been completed and the school has been extensively renovated and now provides a high quality learning environment. Staff morale is high and staff are eagerly embracing new ideas and are very keen to improve. They are behind the headteacher's huge commitment and exciting vision. There is a good ethos with a very strong sense of community. Pupils' personal development is good and this is reflected in their outstanding behaviour. Pupils' personal needs are well catered for and as a result they feel very safe and secure. The curriculum is satisfactory, and extra-curricular provision is outstanding, with pupils enjoying a wide range of clubs and activities, including many exciting trips.

Although achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, children have insufficient opportunities to initiate their own learning or engage in well-planned play. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and reach standards that are above average. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6, standards are broadly average in Year 6, and an increasing proportion of pupils are working at the higher Level 5. Teaching is satisfactory, but assessment information is not used consistently to plan lessons which meet pupils' individual needs, and marking does not always tell pupils how to improve. Although the tracking of pupils' progress has improved, uneven progress is not always identified. Improved monitoring of teaching and the curriculum has resulted in the school knowing itself well and being able to plan sensibly for improvements. Parents and other stakeholders are very supportive of the school; as one parent wrote, 'It is a heartening feeling to leave one's child in this environment'. The school has made satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection. It has responded well to challenging circumstances and is now poised to move on.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage and ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for well-planned play and that all areas of learning are robustly planned for and effectively delivered.
- Use assessment information more consistently to plan work that is better matched to pupils' needs and ensure that marking of pupils' work consistently indicates what they need to do to improve further.
- Track pupils' performance more rigorously in order to identify where teaching and learning are less effective and where improvements could be made.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children join the Reception class with standards that are broadly average, with a significant proportion doing better than expected and an equally large proportion with limited communication and social skills.

Children's progress in communication, language and literacy skills and mathematical skills is satisfactory, but children have less opportunity to develop other skills.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have significantly improved since the previous inspection and are now above average, although standards in writing are not as high as those in reading and mathematics. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2 and pupils in Year 2 make particularly good progress. Although standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6, they have improved this year, and a higher proportion of pupils are working at the higher Level 5. Achievement is satisfactory overall but progress across the year groups is inconsistent. The school is likely to meet its targets except in English, where there may be some shortcomings at the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties are achieving well, with effective support promoting good progress, especially in reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. As a result of good social development, pupils are polite and have very good manners. They are sensible and trustworthy and genuinely care about each other. Pupils say they feel very safe in school. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and pupils are not afraid to ask questions. As one girl said, 'Everyone has friends here'. Pupils gain confidence and many are very self-assured. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and they work hard in lessons. Pupils talk animatedly about the many trips and visits, for example, to the busy city of Bristol where they can appreciate a lifestyle that contrasts with their own. Behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding. Most pupils attend school regularly but attendance is only satisfactory because of the number of families taking holidays in term time and the erratic attendance of a few. Pupils are aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. They can explain what constitutes a healthy diet and know what they should do to keep safe. They like exercise and are enthusiastic about the 'huff and puff' activities at playtime. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Year 6 talked excitedly about helping out in the school's café in a local park. Pupils' mature attitudes combined with improving academic standards ensure that they are well prepared for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. In the Foundation Stage, communication, language, literacy and mathematics skills are adequately taught. However, there are too few opportunities for children to make their own discoveries. Planning lacks rigour and makes limited reference to the small steps individual pupils need to make in order to reach early learning goals. There are examples of good

teaching in Years 1 to 6. In these well-planned, carefully structured lessons it is made very clear to pupils what they need to learn and why. Challenging questions are used to develop learning and make pupils think. In the less effective lessons the teacher's guidance is not clear enough and this results in pupils being uncertain about what they are expected to do. Teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils with learning difficulties. However, in the Foundation Stage there are missed opportunities for teaching assistants to extend pupils' learning. Assessment information is not used consistently to plan lessons that build on pupils' previous learning. This results in some activities being too easy for higher-attaining pupils or too difficult for others. The quality of marking is variable and often pupils are not sufficiently informed about how they can improve their work. The school's strategies for monitoring and supporting teaching are starting to improve the quality of teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Provision in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, with good provision for music and physical education. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and satisfactory provision for gifted and talented pupils. In the Foundation Stage, there are not enough planned opportunities for child-initiated activities and planning for some aspects of provision lacks rigour.

Opportunities for curricular enrichment are outstanding. There is an exciting range of visits and visitors, and very good links with the church, including the vicar's excellent contribution to school assemblies. Pupils have participated in valuable musical and sports events, such as performing in the Albert Hall and representing the school in athletics at county level. Pupils are given the opportunity to set up their own clubs and this makes them feel 'grown up' as well as 'getting to know the younger children'. Provision for health education is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good. The school is a happy, safe place where all staff take pride in caring for the pupils and improving provision. Pupils say that the school has a 'warm feeling.' Child protection procedures are in place. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and good use is made of outside agencies to provide support and advice and specialised training for staff. The monitoring of academic performance is satisfactory. A great deal of work has been done to assess and track pupils' progress. The information is now being used to identify and support pupils who are underachieving in English. However, tracking information is not always used to spot when learning slows in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has led the school well during a difficult period, providing a clear sense of direction and creating a new primary school identity. This has included establishing a capable senior leadership team and enabling subject leaders to start to develop their skills. There is a much clearer understanding of standards and this has supported the production of useful subject action plans and has underpinned the school's accurate self-evaluation. The monitoring of teaching and learning is getting better and there is a concerted effort to develop staff expertise, including working in partnership with other local schools. The analysis of data has also improved; however, data is not always used rigorously enough to identify uneven patterns of learning. Governors are very supportive and well informed about the work of the school. Parents' views have been gathered but not yet responded to. However, parents appreciate the staff's hard work and commitment. The school is in a good position to improve further.

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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	3	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	3	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	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?	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?	3	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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and were very impressed by your good manners and outstanding behaviour. We know it has been very hard for you while all the building work has been going on but I am sure you will feel it is well worth it now you have such lovely classrooms and a big new hall. The headteacher and other staff are working very hard to improve your school and make sure you are well looked after. We were glad to hear that you enjoy school so much, including the after-school clubs and interesting visits. It was nice to see that everyone in school is very friendly and you really try to help each other.

We appreciate all the work you do in the local community. We liked hearing about your work in the school's café in the park. You work hard in your lessons and make satisfactory progress. Staff help those of you who find school work difficult and make sure you do well. We have asked your teachers to make sure that younger pupils have better opportunities to learn through play. The marking of your books could be improved and teachers need to make sure that work is not too hard or too easy for you. We have also asked teachers to keep an eye on how much progress you make from one year to the next.

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