



Lydney Church of England Community School (VC)

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115635
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279642
Inspection dates 20 September 2005 to 21 September 2005
Reporting inspector Julia Coop RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bream Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Lydney
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Gloucestershire GL15 5JH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01594 842172
Number on roll	214	Fax number	01594 842172
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr C Brooker
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2000	Headteacher	Ms Louisa Lawson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This very popular average-size school is situated in the small but growing town of Lydney in the Forest of Dean. The school has doubled in size in the last few years. Most pupils who attend are from the immediate, socially mixed area. Almost all pupils come from white British family backgrounds. When the youngest children start school, their attainment is wide ranging and below average overall. Many children start with below average language and personal and social skills. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of children identified as having special educational needs, but this varies considerably from year to year. Recently, the school has experienced a large change of staff due to retirement and promotion. It is planning to change its management structure in the near future.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lydney is an outstanding school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has taken the school to new heights, resulting in a dramatic improvement in standards. The school knows itself exceedingly well and knows what it wants to do to be even better. It provides excellent value for money and is well placed to go from strength to strength.

The support that the headteacher has received from all the staff has been exemplary. Governors are committed to the school and are hardworking, although at this stage, new governors are not yet confident enough to challenge its work. Underpinning the school's work is a strong commitment to children achieving high standards and enjoying their learning. Children make excellent progress overall and almost every year, by the time they leave in Year 6 they reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science.

Excellent teaching and an exceptional curriculum ensures that children work hard all the time and want to do their best. Teachers help them to grow in confidence and children know that if they get stuck, someone is there to help them. The school sets individual learning targets in some classes, but recognise it could do even more to help children check on their own learning.

Children are very proud of their school. They are polite, friendly and confident. Children in the Reception class quickly settle into the school routines because they are treated as individuals and sensitively encouraged. The school has created a caring environment where everyone feels valued and fully involved in school matters. The quality of provision in the foundation stage is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school has no important weaknesses but the few things that need to be done to build on the school's strengths are:
- build on the start to introduce individual learning targets to improve children's knowledge of their own learning
- develop the skills of the new governors so that they can confidently challenge the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children make outstanding progress overall. They start school with below average skills. In particular children start with below average language and personal and social skills and many lack confidence. Emphasis is placed successfully on promoting a love and enjoyment for school, with a focus in the Reception class on children organising their own learning. As a result, the children thrive, achieve well and soon become very happy, settled and eager to learn.

This positive start provides a highly successful platform for learning that is nurtured and successfully developed in Years 1 and 2. Although the standards children reach by the end of Year 2 are average, they achieve well in relation to their capabilities when they start in Year 1, because they are not afraid to 'have a go'. By the time children start in Year 3, they are very confident learners. The school successfully fosters this very positive attitude without losing sight of developing the children's basic skills. As a result, all groups and abilities of children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are more able make enormous progress as they continue to move through the school. By the end of Year 6 they attain standards that are exceptionally high in English, science and mathematics. Standards and achievement in mathematics dipped in 2004, but there has been a dramatic improvement this year as children achieved exceptionally high standards, due to the commitment of staff and pupils. The school sets challenging targets and children work exceedingly hard to meet them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children are happy and very proud of their school. They enjoy their 'exciting and unusual' activities. As a result, attendance is above average and behaviour is outstanding throughout. Children feel they are treated very fairly and are clear about the school rules. They really appreciate the ease with which they can talk to staff and let them know their views either informally or through the school council.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children's appreciation of arts and other cultures is very strong. They have a clear sense of self-worth because they know that they are valued as individuals. The use of 'think books' to write down their feelings is an excellent example of the school's commitment to developing children's self-knowledge. Children are sociable with each other and with adults. They readily listen to others and accept differences in opinion. They know what is right and wrong and understand the need to take responsibility and to accept that they make mistakes. 'To own up is to be grown up' is a well-known phrase in the school!

Children feel very safe at school because adults care about them. They talk very positively about the 'Walk on Wednesday' and 'Feet on Friday' travel plan which is improving their safety and encouraging them to walk to school. They understand the need to eat well and enjoy healthy snacks at break-time. They greatly enjoy sport and know that exercise is essential for good health. Children are keen to organise fundraising activities to help others. Their exceptionally high standards in literacy and numeracy, combined with their outstanding personal development, give them a flying start in preparation for life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching is excellent because teachers have very high expectations and plan their lessons exceptionally well to challenge and include all children. Decisive action is taken when gaps in learning are found. As a result, children with learning difficulties and disabilities receive highly relevant support from skilled teaching assistants and a specialist teacher so they make the same exceptional progress in lessons as their friends. Teachers have the knack of making learning interesting; the children say that 'even though we are working hard we still have fun'. In lessons, lively teaching that encourages children to use all of their senses, in a wide variety of hands-on practical learning experiences, rapidly moves children along in their learning. The children are immensely proud of their success. New teachers are already fitting into the school's 'way of working' because of the very effective support they receive. Everyone shares ideas and a great desire for children to succeed. Regular activities such as 'Talking Partners', 'Role Play' and 'Mind Mapping' ensure that children are as excited about learning as the teachers are about teaching. Planning is meticulous and imaginative. It is based on a very detailed knowledge of each individual child's learning and an understanding of how children learn best.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding, not only in its variety and richness, but also because it is linked so well to how a child's learning skills develop. Consequently, underpinning the curriculum is a very strong emphasis on developing creative thinking and problem solving, within a specially resourced room called the 'Thinking Zone'. Here, different areas and activities encourage children to use their imagination to solve problems or just simply enjoy the peace and quiet. The partnership between teachers and assistants contributes immensely to the success of the area and the contribution it makes to developing children's confidence.

Recognition and commitment to each child as an individual are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and those with special talents are encouraged, supported and challenged. Many clubs, activities, visits and visitors, such as artists, actors, and the Forest school, where the youngest children learn about the environment, plus the outside classroom, which accommodates a wide variety of curriculum activities, add an interesting and enjoyable dimension to what happens in the classroom; whilst in addition, an equally strong emphasis on personal, social, health and citizenship education prepares children exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral support and guidance is exceptional. Staff have a genuine concern for children's welfare and provide excellent care. Procedures for ensuring child protection are very well established. Children feel safe because 'teachers talk things through when things go wrong'. For example, they are very positive about the play-leader who has helped them to improve lunchtime behaviour and to resolve friendship problems. A special place in the music room, called the 'Listening post', provides all children, especially those with emotional difficulties, with very positive support and demonstrates the commitment of the school to support all children.

Academic guidance given to children is good. Through detailed monitoring of their work and personal development, the school makes sure that children of all abilities receive the help they need. The help given to them by staff in lessons and around the school is caring and sensitive but allows children to develop their independence. Children say that they can always ask for help and they will receive it. In some classes, teachers have begun to set individual learning targets which are shared with the children. The children say that they like these because it helps them to check on their own learning. The school recognises that this approach motivates children and is keen to adapt this further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The work of the school is driven by the excellent leadership of the headteacher. She has every child's interests at heart and high expectations that they will achieve their very best. She continually explores ways to improve the quality of education and receives tremendous support from the highly skilled team of staff. The very effective partnership established with local schools reflects the school's desire to share expertise and learn from others for the benefit of children and staff.

The quality of the school's self-evaluation is exceptional. It knows that it is doing very well and is rightly proud of its achievements. It constantly seeks innovative ways to improve even further and carefully plans, evaluates and monitors the quality of its effectiveness and its development. Children's and parents' views are carefully considered. The majority of parents are very happy with the school and make comments such as "the staff deserve a medal".

The current and previous senior management team provide excellent support to the headteacher and have led many highly successful initiatives. However, with recent retirements and new staff appointments, the headteacher and the governors have taken this opportunity to make carefully thought out plans for the future. Following detailed consultations, a different management structure has been proposed that will take the school onto the next stage of its development. The governing body is fully aware of the school's strengths and supports it wholeheartedly. The school recognises

that new governors will require guidance in order to help them develop more confidence to question and challenge the school's work and support it through its forthcoming period of change. The school is well placed to build on its considerable and sustained successes.

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	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?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	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

Lydney Cof E (VC) Community School Bream Road Gloucestershire GL15 5 JH

Thursday, 22nd September 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school when we visited. We are very pleased that you really like coming to school. Your school is looking lovely with the beautiful art work that you produce. We agree with you that there are many wonderful things happening at Lydney.

These are the things that we are most pleased about:

we think that the teachers are excellent at making lessons interesting for you and we know that you are enthusiastic about learning and try very hard. Well done!

we think that your behaviour is excellent. You are becoming extremely sensible and caring

we notice that you enjoy eating fruit at break times and are enthusiastic about Walk on Wednesday and Feet of Friday. Keep this up!

we especially liked all the interesting activities that the teachers plan for you and you are very lucky to have the Thinking Zone. We think this is a very special place that is helping you learn really well

your teachers make sure that you are very safe and well looked after

your outstanding headteacher has ensured that your school is the very special place that it is. She is helped by all the teachers and support staff who have worked very hard.

Although we think your school is an excellent school, we would like the school to work on a couple of things so that it can keep up the good work and help you even more. These are:

making sure that teachers share individual learning targets with you and help you to achieve them. These will help you know what you need to work on to improve

giving your new school governors some training so that they can help your school even more.

Well done everyone! Yours sincerely Dr Julia Coop (lead inspector)