



Dorchester St Birinus Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123129
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281409
Inspection dates 26 June 2006 to 27 June 2006
Reporting inspector John Earish AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Queen Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Dorchester-on-Thames
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Wallingford OX10 7HR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 340081
Number on roll	98	Fax number	01865 340081
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David Herlihy
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2001	Headteacher	Miss Helen Clark

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Birinus is a small school serving the villages around Dorchester-on-Thames. The pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Almost all are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. When children start school, their skills and abilities are those expected of four year olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below that found nationally, and there are no children with statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which gives good value for money. Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and enjoy coming to school. Their personal development is outstanding because they are very well cared for at school and feel secure and happy. As a result, they behave extremely well, help and support each other and are very eager to learn. Teachers know the pupils very well and are very clear about what they expect them to learn. The good quality of planning ensures that lessons are interesting, varied and challenging to pupils of all abilities. As a result, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are also good. Children quickly develop skills as independent learners because of the very good range of activities designed for them and the high quality support given to them.

The leadership of the school is effective, and has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and focuses strongly on raising standards and improving the achievement of all pupils. This gives a strong sense of purpose and direction to the school and adults and pupils feel valued. However, the governors are aware that she needs an office where she can work uninterrupted and speak confidentially to staff and parents. The school has identified the need to upgrade the already satisfactory provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in order to raise standards to those achieved in literacy and numeracy.

The school knows itself very well, and accurately assesses its own effectiveness as good. The many improvements since the last inspection provide ample evidence that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve provision for ICT to give pupils the opportunity to extend their skills;
- improve the accommodation to provide an office for the headteacher.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well during their time at school. Good achievement is due to the good teaching and the detailed tracking of pupils' progress towards their challenging targets so that no groups underachieve.

Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are expected of four year olds. They make good progress and are well prepared for later learning because teaching is of good quality. The majority reach the expected learning goals by the time they start in Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school and, by the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics and have been so for a number of years. By the end of Year 6, standards

are well above average in all core subjects. Predictions for the current Year 6 show that pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets. All groups of pupils are achieving well, including those with learning difficulties. At the time of the last inspection, standards in ICT were unsatisfactory and pupils were not making sufficient progress. However, pupils are now attaining standards that are appropriate for their age and all groups are achieving well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is an orderly community where each individual is highly valued and achievement is widely celebrated. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning, their relationships and behaviour are all extremely good, and have a positive effect on both the quality of their education and the standards of work they achieve.

Pupils enjoy school very much and attendance is very good. Pupils of all ages, gender and ability play happily together. They understand how to stay safe and have an excellent knowledge of healthy lifestyles. They speak enthusiastically about healthy eating and are very aware of the importance of drinking plenty of water and taking regular exercise. Pupils willingly take responsibility for duties that support the smooth running of the school, and eagerly participate in the school council by representing the views of their classmates.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community and are fully involved in raising funds for different charities. They take their responsibility for the environment seriously through activities such as developing the habitat at Hurst Water Meadows alongside the trustees and local people. The high priority the school places on valuing and developing all pupils as individuals means that pupils thrive and grow in confidence and maturity during their time at the school. As a result, they are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall. The combination of good teaching and very positive attitudes to learning ensures that pupils make good progress in most lessons. Teachers skilfully use questions to probe pupils' understanding of new ideas and to extend their learning. In the best lessons, teachers are making good use of tracking information to continue to raise pupils' achievement. They constantly check pupils understanding and quickly explain where pupils have gone wrong and correct mistakes. There are some occasions when teaching, although satisfactory, does not fully engage all pupils within the class because of the way learning is planned or managed, and then progress slows.

Assessment is used well to track pupils' progress and, to provide extra help as soon as it is needed. Careful and thorough analysis of data helps to identify and address any areas of underachievement and makes a major contribution to raising standards. The recent involvement of pupils in self-assessment is successfully helping them to understand how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. The school has successfully revised the curriculum to promote greater creativity and enjoyment. Pupils' computer skills are developing well and are used well to support learning in other subjects. However, the school has prioritised the improvement of the existing satisfactory provision in order to raise standards even further to match those achieved in literacy, numeracy and science. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills at investigating and experimenting in science. This was previously judged to be unsatisfactory. The pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy is promoted effectively through the curriculum, especially in science, physical education and personal, social and health education. The school provides a good range of after-school activities and visits, which add much to pupils' enjoyment and learning during their time at the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils receive outstanding care and guidance. Teachers and their assistants create a friendly and secure environment where all are valued equally. Adults provide pupils with clear and effective guidance about their performance and how they can improve. They are also successfully helping pupils to assess their own performance in school. Older pupils say it gives them responsibility for their own learning and the confidence to share their judgments with others. This is a good example of the impact of the school's care and support on pupils' personal development by increasing their independence and self-esteem. The systematic tracking of the progress of individual pupils is helping the school to plan an appropriate level of support for all children, including those identified with specific learning and personal difficulties. There are regular and effective meetings between teachers, parents and support assistants which contribute to these pupils achieving as well as their peers. Arrangements for safeguarding children are robust and regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management contribute significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development and their good academic achievement. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Team work is a strong feature of this school and is an essential element in the distinctive happy school ethos. For example, senior managers

and subjects leaders work together tirelessly to monitor provision and outcomes so that all pupils can achieve well. Parents overwhelming support this view and one commented that 'The school is a happy place and the teaching standards are high. We could not ask for better'.

The school's self evaluation is of good quality, although judgements about personal development and care are modest. Nevertheless, the teachers and governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well and needs to improve. The views of parents and pupils are sought as part of this process.

The accommodation is limited and has a direct impact on the way the senior teachers and administrators organise their work. The small school office is used for school administration and as a headteacher's office. There is no separate space where the headteacher can work or hold private meetings with staff or parents. If confidential matters are discussed, other adults have to vacate the room. The staff co-operate very well together to overcome these difficulties but all agree that the present arrangements are far from satisfactory.

The governing body is good at supporting and challenging the school and in meeting its statutory responsibilities. It is well organised and fulfils its responsibilities by means of an effective committee structure. Governors are very aware of the shortcomings of the accommodation and are discussing ways of extending the building within the limitations of the school budget. Staffing and resources for learning are very well considered and their effectiveness appropriately evaluated. The school is well placed 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?	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	2	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	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	1	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?	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?	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?	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

Pupils

Following my visit to inspect your school I would like to tell you what I think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn. I enjoyed being with you, seeing you work and listening to your experiences and views.

There are lots of things that I liked about your school. Some of them are: * You are able to learn in a very friendly and caring school. Your behaviour is excellent and you get on very well with each other. * Miss Clark and the teachers are good at helping you to do your best. * You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and try very hard in your lessons. * The school council represents your views very well and you all help the school to run smoothly. * Your teachers spend a lot of time looking at what you have done in class and working out how to help you to make your work even better. * You like all the clubs, visits and after school activities the school has organised for you. You especially like the activity days which are exciting and interesting. * You help care for the local environment by developing the habitat at Hurst Water Meadows alongside the trustees and local people.

I think your school is already good. To make it even better, however, I am asking teachers to give you even more opportunities to use computers during lessons in lots of different and exciting ways. I also think your headteacher should have her own office where she can work uninterrupted. I enjoyed being in your school. I hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely,

John Earish

Lead Inspector