



Minehead First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123656
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281526
Inspection dates 23 February 2006 to 24 February 2006
Reporting inspector Hazel Callaghan AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Townsend Road
School category	Community		Minehead
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Somerset TA24 5RG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01643 702 938
Number on roll	333	Fax number	01643 704 125
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Toby Harrison
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Brenda Coupe

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 23 February 2006 - 24 February 2006	Inspection number 281526
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Minehead First School is a large school. Most pupils are of White British origin with a small proportion from minority ethnic groups. A small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language. Many adults in the town are dependent on seasonal employment and the difficulties that this brings is reflected in the above average take up of free school meals. A resource base attached to the school caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Within the main school, the number of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The school works closely with a private nursery on the same site. Attainment on entry to the school is below average overall. The new headteacher has been at the school for a term and a half.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Minehead First School is effective in providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. Strengths of the school are the provision for children in the reception classes and the resource base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The inclusive ethos of the school is strong and the provision for pupils' personal development, their care support and well-being are good. Standards, achievement and teaching are satisfactory. Weaknesses in the school's ability to identify underachievement in the past and in setting challenging targets have slowed its progress, but under the good leadership of the new headteacher things are improving quickly. There are now clear expectations set for pupils' progress and good strategies to develop teachers' expertise in evaluating how well pupils are doing. Many of these systems are still new so they have not yet had an impact on raising standards. The headteacher's evaluation of the school has been confirmed by the inspection, and under her good leadership the school has a secure capacity to improve. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in English and mathematics by identifying pupils' underachievement and developing teachers' expertise so they understand what pupils need to do to improve
- build on the good start made in the development of rigorous systems of monitoring and evaluation so senior managers gain a better insight into how to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall but there are variations across the school.

Children enter the reception classes with a range of abilities but many have significant difficulties in communication and language. Although many children do not attain the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1, most have made good progress in all areas of their learning.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have fallen significantly over the last two years. There are a number of reasons for this decline. These include a larger number of pupils starting school with learning difficulties than in the past. A few have also had significant behavioural and emotional problems. This poor behaviour has had an impact on both these pupils' learning and that of other pupils in the class. In the past, assessment of pupils' learning has not been sufficiently sharp to identify areas of weakness and teachers' expectations have not been high enough. The achievement of boys in the current Year 3, particularly in mathematics, has been correctly identified by the school as a weakness and satisfactory strategies are being developed to address this and other types of underachievement.

The progress pupils make through Years 1-4 is now satisfactory overall, but it is often not good enough in writing and mathematics. The achievement of pupils with significant learning difficulties and disabilities in the resource base is good, especially in their personal development and English. Those with learning difficulties in the other classes make similar progress to their peers. There is very little difference in the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are attentive and respond well to staff. There is a small group of individuals, however, who have significant emotional difficulties and they often find school life difficult to cope with and sometimes behave inappropriately. They are well supported and are beginning to use strategies to control their frustration and anger so they are better able to participate in the harmonious and friendly life of the school. Pupils develop very sensible attitudes and feel safe because they trust adults to deal with their anxieties. Rising attendance levels to above average rates is evidence of pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils take on jobs and responsibilities willingly and there are lots of opportunities to contribute to life in the wider community, which they enjoy. The exciting new Viking ship in the playground was organised by the school council, for example. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils show an awareness of the needs of others and are developing an understanding of how to support one another. Pupils use their understanding of the importance of developing healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe satisfactorily to make personal choices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory overall with strengths in the reception classes and in the resource base. Teachers in these classes use effective systems for assessing pupils' work and progress so they are able to build successfully on what children know and can do. The introduction of a new method to teach letter sounds in the reception classes, for example, is having a positive impact on children's early reading and writing skills.

Procedures for assessing pupils' work in other classes are not as rigorous, consequently work is not always suitably matched to pupils' needs. Teachers' marking is not sufficiently evaluative and does not provide pupils with a clear picture of what they need to do to move forward. The exception is in English, where good progress has been made in the identification of pupils' standards and how they need to improve. Teachers are successful in encouraging pupils' interest and most show curiosity and motivation. Management of pupils' behaviour is good and the school is a calm and

positive learning environment. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are sensitively supported so they rarely disturb other learners. A good number of teaching assistants support pupils well, and are particularly effective in helping those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum through the school is satisfactory. There are elements of significant strength including the opportunities for pupils to explore their local environment. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good, although the outdoor play area is some distance from the classrooms and so children do not have continuous access to this facility. Transition arrangements between reception and Year 1 are developing well. In Year 1, work is now better matched to children's learning needs and includes a 'carousel' of exciting practical experiences. The school is also justifiably proud of the emphasis it places upon developing the personal and social skills of all its pupils. There has been a very recent improvement in making sure that plans for lessons are clearly focused on what pupils are learning. However, there is still much work to be done on this so standards rise. The curriculum satisfactorily focuses on developing pupils' awareness of being safe and keeping healthy and preparing for pupils for their next stage of education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good and central to the school's work. Staff are very sensitive to pupils' personal needs and go out of their way to meet them. As a result, pupils are happy and confident. Links with the nursery are very good and this helps children settle quickly into school. There is a consistent effort to reward good behaviour at every level, which is having a very positive impact. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. The very good levels of care and support provided by staff in the resource base are very much valued by the children and parents. There have been successful improvements in the school's strategies in dealing with the small number of pupils with significant emotional problems. The school's procedures for health and safety and child protection are effective. Outside agencies are used very well to support both pupils and their families when there is a need.

Academic guidance for pupils is in the early stages of development. Teachers now provide pupils with targets for learning in English but these have yet to be developed in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership. Her rapid and insightful evaluation of the school and its needs has identified

many key areas for development. She has created a clear sense of direction and purpose and is supported in her passionate commitment to high quality of care and education by her staff. There is a strong sense of the school moving forward.

The governors recognise and are proud of the strengths of the school. They are very much committed to inclusion and are planning well ahead to ensure continuity of the school's resource base. They are not as clear about what needs to be done to identify academic underachievement. Nor are the senior managers, who are not experienced in the use of very precise systems of assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Therefore, in the past, they have not set challenging targets for teaching, learning and outcomes in their subjects. This is all changing with new procedures being introduced by the headteacher.

The leadership of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as for gifted and talented pupils, is good. The school has built a good partnership with parents who are very supportive of the school. Insufficient improvements had been made since the previous inspection until recently. The impact of the new headteacher's leadership can be clearly seen and the school is well placed to make necessary improvements.

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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	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	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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	3	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	4	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

I am writing to say thank you for making us feel welcome in your school and for helping us with our questions. We really enjoyed chatting to you and found everything you said very interesting. I thought you would like to know what we found out about your school.

What we liked about the school:

•You are happy at school and enjoy your lessons. •You get on very well with each other and the adults in the school. •Most of you behave sensibly and are kind to each other. •You understand that some children have problems in behaving well. •We think you try hard to do well in your work. •You know about keeping healthy and safe. •You are given lots of opportunities to take responsibility and you do it well. •The teachers look after you well and help you feel safe and secure. •You have lots of opportunities to go out of school and study the local area.

What we have asked the school to do:

•We have asked the teachers to make sure that you all know what you need to do to move forward in writing and in mathematics. •We have asked the staff to keep a close eye on how well you are doing so they know how to help you get better at your work.

Thank you again for being so polite and helping us.