



Widcombe Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109008
Local Authority Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number 288249
Inspection date 9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Archway Street
School category	Community		Bath
Age range of pupils	4-7		BA2 4JG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01225 421998
Number on roll (school)	183	Fax number	01225 421998
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Trevor Dolby
		Headteacher	Alison Watts
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated near the centre of Bath and is of average size for its type. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, although there are few from ethnic minorities and none who speak a language other than English at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school in which pupils attain standards that are well above average. As a parent rightly said, 'Since 2000, an excellent school has got even better'. Pupils' achievement is excellent. After entering the school with skills and knowledge a little above the expected levels, almost all reach the goals set for children at the end of the Reception year. By the end of Year 2, all pupils attain the standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics, and half exceed these levels. Pupils' personal development and well-being are very good indeed. They know how to keep healthy, for instance, through regular exercise, and how to stay safe. Their attendance is good and their behaviour is excellent.

These successes are achieved through excellent teaching. Teachers' outstanding knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses is used very well to plan for their individual needs. A notable feature is the superb quality of the marking and annotation of work from the start of the Reception year onwards. Helpful comments are full of praise and designed to improve standards. They are shared with each pupil individually and reflect teachers' very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The curriculum also is outstanding. The development of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is given appropriate emphasis, and pupils are given a very wide range of other opportunities, such as learning French, dance or cookery. The range of clubs is unusually wide for pupils of this age. As a pupil said, 'I love art, gym and cooking'. Care, guidance and support are excellent. Pupils are very well cared for and receive academic guidance of very high quality. They are set simple targets for improvement and know what they need to learn next. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and are involved in developing their skills. Children are prepared well for starting school; for instance, new pupils experience story times in the term before they start.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Led by an exceptional headteacher, the staff have improved on the excellence identified at the last inspection. The skills of all staff are used to the full, for instance, through the teaching of ICT and French by higher-level teaching assistants. The way staff plan together ensures that pupils experience a consistency of approach throughout their time in the school, for example, when learning to read and write. Monitoring and evaluation are very effective and staff and governors have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths, and of the few areas that might be improved. This has ensured that pupils receive education of equally high quality both in the Reception year and in Years 1 and 2. The school has improved its provision of excellent infant education identified at the last inspection and remains exceptionally well placed for this to continue.

What the school should do to improve further

As at the last inspection in 2003, there are no specific actions needed to improve the excellent education that this school already provides.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The school meets the challenging targets that it sets for itself. Pupils attain standards that are well above average for their age. In the Reception year, children make very good progress in learning to read and write and, after one term at school, all recognise and can sound the letters of the alphabet. Many can read a simple sentence. They develop a range of other skills and, by the end of the year, almost all have reached the goals set for children of their age. In 2005 the school identified some weaknesses in the development of social skills which were rectified in 2006 following changes to the curriculum. By the end of Year 2, many have attained skills and knowledge expected of older pupils. For example, they can write at length with accuracy, using paragraphs and speech marks, and solve mathematical problems involving unknown quantities. They know that exercise increases the flow of blood and oxygen to the muscles. In creative subjects they can carry out art work in a variety of media, reproducing texture and detail with accuracy, and can model a complex dance sequence to the rest of the class. These are outstanding achievements. All pupils achieve equally well. For example, those with learning difficulties attain the standards expected from those of average ability.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn and play well together and are able to discuss complex ideas such as making choices. They learn about other cultures in British society in various ways, for instance, through e-mail links with other schools. Pupils' understanding of how to stay healthy and safe is very good for their age. They know the importance of exercise and a healthy diet and understand when they need to be in the care of an adult, for example, when crossing the road. They behave very well and know the importance of sharing and taking turns. Pupils enjoy school and talk with great enthusiasm about much of what they learn. Attendance is good and the school is doing all it can to improve it further. Pupils are beginning to have a very good understanding of the importance of contributing to society. For instance, they take responsibilities in the school and share the food they prepare with their families and with elderly people. The development of the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT that they will need in later life is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is consistently outstanding throughout the school and as a result pupils make rapid progress in all classes. The teaching has many superb features, notably the consistency of approach to the teaching of key skills of reading, writing and

mathematics. Teachers use their very good knowledge of pupils' progress to plan work that meets their individual needs. This applies to all pupils, not only the least and most able. Teachers' expectations are exceptionally high. For example, in one lesson, alliteration was being taught to the least able Year 2 pupils. The teacher expected them to achieve as well as more able pupils and adapted her teaching methods to enable this to happen. The exceptional quality of marking and annotation has already been noted. In the Reception year, children are taught very well through a mix of guided play and more formal teaching. The skills of teaching assistants and parent volunteers are used very effectively in general classroom work and in specialist areas such as French and ICT.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils are taught an excellent curriculum. Apart from the strengths in literacy, mathematics and ICT already noted, they have a very wide range of other experiences. Reception children benefit from a very well-planned curriculum and excellent resources that enable them to play with excitement and imagination. They take part in some adventurous activities, such as 'welly walks' and a journey by train. Older pupils are taught a wide range of subjects to levels which are advanced for their age. These include science, art, dance and French. The range of extra activities is exceptional and includes visits, visitors such as emergency service workers, and a wide range of clubs offering further experiences in sport, creative arts and skills such as cookery.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are cared for very well. There are excellent relationships with external agencies and with parents. There are very good arrangements for child protection and health and safety, where the school is rightly alert to the need to monitor and update all aspects of security. Arrangements for introducing children to school and preparing them for junior school are very good. Pupils receive academic guidance of exceptional quality through the outstanding marking and individual discussions with the teacher about how to improve their work. Simple targets such as, 'I need to use capital letters and full stops correctly', are shared with pupils and are monitored by teachers who, through careful assessment and record-keeping, have an accurate understanding of each pupil's needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are characterised by the way the school places the highest priority on meeting the needs of each pupil as an individual, a strategy that has met with great success in terms of what they achieve. The exceptional headteacher is well supported by very effective leadership of the Foundation Stage and by others in management roles. A good example of the headteacher's approach

is that, in addition to monitoring the teaching of others, she models excellent teaching through her own practice. The well-informed governors demonstrate their commitment through frequent visits to the school and by providing voluntary support for teachers. Monitoring and evaluation are highly effective and accurate. For example, detailed analysis of data is accompanied by straightforward comments about any weakness identified and the action needed to improve things. The findings of the inspection fully support the school's own analysis of its strengths. The school is outward looking and is willing to share the reasons for its success with others. It is also willing to learn from them, while retaining a focus on the needs of its own pupils. Leadership and management have been very effectively strengthened through the development of the skills of all staff. This approach means the school is exceptionally well placed to provide infant education of the very highest quality and to remain at the forefront in this field, where it has been since the last inspection.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when I visited your school recently. I want to thank those of you who told me about how good the school is. This letter is to tell you what I thought of your school.

Your school is one of the very best. These are some of the best things about it.

- Your work is excellent. Some is as good as children do in junior school. I especially enjoyed watching Year 2 do their 'puppet' dance.
- You are taught very well because the teachers know what each of you needs to learn, and how to teach it to you. They are very good at showing you how to improve your work.
- There are lots of exciting things to do in lessons and clubs. Reception children have lots of interesting games and toys. You learn different subjects like French and cooking.
- Your behaviour is very good indeed and you work well together.
- You know a lot about how to be healthy and safe.
- The staff tell your parents how you are getting on and are good at using people from outside the school to help you.
- The headteacher and the other teachers run the school very well indeed.
- Your parents agree with us that it is an excellent school.

Although there are no important weaknesses, the staff and the governors are always looking for ways to improve even more.