



Avonmouth CE VC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109140
Local Authority Bristol, City of
Inspection number 288293
Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jacqueline Ikin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Catherine Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Avonmouth
Age range of pupils	4–11		Bristol BS11 9LG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 9823595
Number on roll (school)	213	Fax number	0117 9823595
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	T Hills
		Headteacher	R Dolling
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006	Inspection number 288293
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Avonmouth is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and one or two of these pupils speak English as an additional language. There are a small number of children in the school who are looked after by the local authority. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is above average. There is an above-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, many of these having either emotional and behavioural difficulties or specific difficulties with language and literacy. At the time of the inspection many of the subject leaders were new to their posts.

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 school, which is improving as a result of the strong leadership of the headteacher. Pupils' personal development and well-being and the quality of care, guidance and support are good. The school has a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Most pupils behave well and concentrate on their work because they feel safe, trusted and valued. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They contribute well to the school and wider community and take their responsibilities around the school very seriously. They are very proud of their school and, when asked, found it hard to think of anything they want to improve.

Achievement is satisfactory. Having entered the school with low levels of attainment, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and reach below-average standards in Year 6. Standards are beginning to improve further in reading and mathematics because teaching now focuses on improving specific aspects of these subjects where pupils have difficulty. More-able pupils reach the standards of which they are capable, but some middle-ability pupils do not always reach their full potential because their work is not always challenging enough. The school provides good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and these pupils achieve well. Pupils who have difficulty in managing their behaviour are integrated particularly well and make good progress because of the skilled and sensitive support that they receive. Pupils' progress in writing is not always as good as it should be because not enough attention is given to helping them develop the vocabulary and grammatical skills they need to express their ideas clearly in speech and in writing.

The quality of teaching and learning and the school's curriculum are satisfactory. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory and standards are largely below average by the time pupils join Year 1. Satisfactory use is made of nationally produced schemes of work to ensure that all subjects are taught progressively as pupils move through the school. There are many after-school activities and good opportunities for music. However, opportunities are missed for pupils to develop their speaking skills and to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills in the course of studying other subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Much has already been done to improve the school's effectiveness in reading, mathematics and pupils' personal development. The school is well aware that further improvement is needed to increase pupils' academic achievement. Nevertheless, there is a clear sense of purpose and a strong sense of teamwork. Well-organised systems for reviewing the school's performance give senior staff and governors the information they need to move the school forward. On this basis, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils have more opportunities to extend their vocabulary and talk about their ideas in order to improve their writing skills.

- Give middle-ability pupils more challenging work to do in all lessons so that they reach their potential.
- Ensure that pupils have more well-planned opportunities to apply their speaking, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From a low starting point when children enter the Nursery, especially in communication, language and literacy, pupils achieve satisfactorily. The school is taking action to improve specific weaknesses in particular subjects. As a result, standards are beginning to improve. For example, the school is successfully closing the gap in attainment between boys and girls. Improvements are also noticeable in reading, mathematics and ICT, where pupils were not doing as well as they should have been at the time of the last inspection. The introduction of target setting and consistent whole-school approaches to teaching reading and calculation in mathematics, together with better resources in ICT, have contributed to the satisfactory progress pupils now make. By the time children reach Year 1 their attainment has improved to below-average levels and these standards are maintained at the end of Year 2. Despite improvements, lost ground has not yet been fully made up across Years 3 to 6, and standards remain below average in Year 6.

Writing has not improved to the same extent as reading and mathematics, mainly because the school has not tackled weaknesses in pupils' spoken language so that they are more skilled at expressing their ideas in writing. More-able pupils make sound progress and those with learning difficulties and disabilities do well. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and pupils looked after by the local authority achieve as well as their classmates. However, some middle-ability pupils do not always meet the targets that are set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils enjoy school and feel valued and secure because of the positive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils' behaviour is good and has improved since the last inspection. Attendance has also risen and is now broadly in line with the national average. The work of the learning mentor has made a significant contribution to these improvements.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is promoted well in assemblies and pupils benefit from a whole-school programme that effectively promotes these aspects of their personal development. Pupils work together amicably and respond positively when given responsibility, for example, as playground mediators or members of the school council. Together with the satisfactory opportunities for reading, number and ICT, this soundly prepares them for their future

lives. Pupils also have a growing understanding of other cultures as a result of some good initiatives, such as 'Black History Month'.

Pupils have a good awareness of the need to lead safe, healthy and active lifestyles, reflecting the school's designation as a Healthy School. They also make a positive contribution to the community, for example, by fundraising for good causes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interest and to help them understand new ideas. Opportunities for pupils to read together in small groups and the consistent teaching of calculation methods in mathematics are helping pupils to make better progress in these subjects.

Most teachers make good use of questions to encourage pupils to think for themselves. However, too much teacher talk and an overuse of worksheets in some lessons limit the development of pupils' speaking and writing skills. While tasks are generally matched suitably to pupils' abilities, this is not always the case for middle-ability pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which meets the needs of most pupils. Satisfactory use is made of national guidance to ensure that pupils acquire basic subject knowledge. Recent modifications to the planning for reading and mathematics have been particularly beneficial. Similar changes have yet to be made so that pupils have more opportunities to express their ideas clearly in speech and in writing and use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.

The curriculum is enriched well by after-school activities and opportunities to learn musical instruments. There is a good range of strategies for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and satisfactory attention is given to more-able pupils. Some middle-ability pupils sometimes miss out because the work set for them is not challenging enough. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Resources are adequate but of variable quality. Those for learning through play are used more fully in the Nursery than in the Reception class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils receive high quality pastoral care and guidance because of the very good knowledge that staff have of individual pupils and their families. Well-thought-out procedures help the youngest children settle quickly into the Nursery and older pupils know that adults will help them if they have a problem. The school's learning mentor provides effective and valuable support for vulnerable

pupils and those with behavioural difficulties, including liaising with their families and outside agencies. This has a positive effect on the progress they make. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and supportive, and pupils are keen to help each other, for example, by acting as peer mediators to sort out simple playground problems. Child protection procedures are well managed and regular health and safety checks are carried out.

Assessment and target setting are used well to check pupils' progress, but their use to plan work to meet pupils' different needs is not always as precise as it should be, particularly for middle-ability pupils. However, the use of 'Learning Diaries' in the Nursery and Reception class are a particular strength.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear sense of direction, aimed at improving pupils' achievement. Senior managers work well together, carefully checking the school's performance through the use of lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work and relevant data. Consequently, the school has a realistic view of its effectiveness. The action it has taken to bring about improvement is beginning to have a beneficial impact, particularly on behaviour, personal development, reading and mathematics. All these factors demonstrate the school's good capacity for moving forward. Nevertheless, the school recognises that more work is needed, especially in writing.

Subject leadership is sound. The leadership of literacy and numeracy is developing well as a result of training. Other subject leaders have been in post for a relatively short period. They have made a good start, but have not yet had time to fully influence standards and achievement.

School governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors visits the school regularly and provides good support. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness, but their monitoring procedures need to be more formalised.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and play. We can see why you are so proud of your school and agree that it gives you a sound education.

What we found out about your school

- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are doing a good job in helping the school to get better and all the teachers are behind them in this.
- The curriculum and the way that you are taught help most of you to achieve satisfactorily, and you are now doing much better in reading and mathematics.
- The school has a warm and friendly atmosphere.
- We think that the school council works well and that you do a lot to help the school run smoothly.
- You behave well and look after the school and each other well.
- The school takes good care of you and helps you to understand how to keep yourselves safe and healthy.

What we think needs to be improved

- The way the school helps you to improve your speaking and writing skills.
- The way the school plans work to help all of you reach your targets.
- The opportunities you have to use your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.