



West Alvington Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 113404
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289611
Inspection date 25 September 2006
Reporting inspector Tom Simpson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	West Alvington
School category	Voluntary controlled		Kingsbridge
Age range of pupils	4-11		TQ7 3PP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01548 852002
Number on roll (school)	40	Fax number	01548 857 788
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	M E Skirton
		Headteacher	Colin Butler
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small primary serving a rural community. The pupils are nearly all White British and none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is broadly average. An above average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. There were no Reception age children in the school at the time of the inspection – although some are expected to be admitted at the beginning of next term. Since the last inspection there have been a considerable number of changes in headship but the situation has been stable since the current headteacher took up the post in 2004.

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 with many strengths. It has improved rapidly in the recent past and has a good capacity to improve further in the future. The main reason for this is the visionary leadership of the headteacher. Other factors include the commitment of staff and governors, the support of parents, close partnerships with other local schools and the positive attitudes of the pupils themselves. One parent wrote convincingly: 'This is a remarkable school led by enthusiastic staff who encourage children to learn in a safe environment.' Another commented: 'I really appreciate that I have such a lovely school to send my children to.'

Although a lot has been done in the recent past, and the results of this have already enriched the quality of pupils' education, it is too recent for all changes to have had maximum impact on standards and progress. For example, in the most recent National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, standards were above average overall, but better in English than in mathematics. The standards reached represent at least satisfactory achievement, given pupils' attainment on entry. There are also some inconsistencies elsewhere. Although good assessment strategies for literacy and numeracy are in place, that is not the case in all subjects. In addition, whilst work set in lessons is well matched to the needs of pupils with different levels of ability and assessment information is used well to identify pupils who are markedly underachieving, the tracking of pupils' progress over longer periods of time is not yet good enough.

The school provides an enriched curriculum for the pupils. This contributes well to their enjoyment of learning and the quality of their education. Other strengths of the school include the personal development of the pupils. They enjoy being at school and are keen to learn and to contribute. They are individually very well known to staff and are very well cared for on a personal level. However, there is insufficient use of short-term academic setting of targets to help pupils understand where they need to improve next. This is particularly relevant to standards in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by teachers and support staff, while planning documentation indicates that appropriate provision is made for Reception children in a mixed-age class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics by introducing a programme of academic setting of targets.
- Ensure that assessment strategies are used more robustly to track the progress of individual pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory and improving, including for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The pupils enter the school with average attainment

and available data indicates that children in the Foundation Stage make at least satisfactory progress. In Years 1 and 2 they make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that standards in Year 2 national assessments are in line with those expected. Satisfactory progress continues to be made in Years 3 to 6 and standards in English, mathematics and science tests for Year 6 pupils are average overall.

Being a small school, however, standards do vary from year to year according to the abilities of pupils in each year group. For example the 2005, Year 6 test results were below average because of a significant inward mobility of pupils, a relatively high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the effects of earlier teaching and management instability. Conversely, results for Year 6 pupils in 2006 were a significant improvement on 2005 and were above average. This was a more able cohort than the previous year group, nevertheless they made good progress because of better quality leadership, teaching and a positive ethos for learning.

There is some variation in the standards and achievement between different subjects. Progress is stronger in English, which has had a major school focus in the recent past, than in mathematics. The school has put a number of strategies in place to raise standards in mathematics, including providing intensive support to small groups of targeted pupils. These are beginning to have a positive effect.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Year 6 pupils told the inspector how much they enjoyed being at the school and appreciated what it had to offer them. They have a clear view of what is expected of them and appreciate that their views and concerns are taken seriously by staff. As a result, they have very positive attitudes to school, behave well in and out of class and relate very well to one another and to the adults in the school. The pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to contribute to the school and wider community. One example was when a group of pupils made a PowerPoint presentation to the governing body on their views on school developmental issues. They also support a wide range of charities. Attendance is slightly above average.

The pupils respond well to the school's strong emphasis on healthy and safe living through regular opportunities for sport and physical education. Last year, the school gained the 'Healthy School Award'. There is a strong Christian ethos and pupils have caring attitudes towards one another. Opportunities within and beyond lessons, such as when they were involved at the consultation and planning stage of a recent school building development, ensure that pupils develop at least satisfactory basic skills needed for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, there is good teaching in some lessons, which is impacting well on pupils' achievement. Specific strengths within the teaching at the school include the positive way that pupils are managed. This is firm but friendly and pupils are consistently treated with courtesy. As a result, they behave well and have positive attitudes toward their work. Good use of imaginative methods motivates the pupils well. During the inspection, for example, Year 1 and 2 pupils planted bulbs during a lesson on instructional writing, which made the lesson really relevant for them. Occasionally, some elements of lessons, such as discussions, are allowed to go on too long, leading to some pupils becoming restless. Modern technology such as interactive whiteboards is used to good effect. Whilst teachers' good use of day-to-day assessment in English and mathematics is helping to raise standards, there is less evidence of such systems being in operation elsewhere, including in science. The attention which the school gives to identifying those who are noticeably underachieving shows to good effect in the way teachers plan their lessons to meet those needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and ensures that pupils' basic skills prepare them appropriately for their future life. Good provision is made for the pupils in mixed-age classes with, for example, extra staff provided to enable literacy and numeracy to be taught separately to Year 3 and 4 and Year 5 and 6 classes. This is supporting rising standards in these subjects well. Planning and provision for Reception children in the Years 1 and 2 class has due regard for their specific needs. The good quality provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities includes successful small group and individual intensive support related to their individual learning targets. There is a good range of enrichment activities, including clubs, visitors to the school and out of school visits. Modern foreign languages are taught and the school holds 'specialist' weeks focusing, for example, on the arts, science and personal, social and health education. During the inspection, older pupils benefited from being taught hockey by an external coach while Year 1 and 2 pupils sat in silence in the local church and listened intently while their teacher read them an extract from 'God's Quiet Things'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. This supports pupils' personal development well. The pupils are very well known and cared for on a personal level. One Year 6 pupil told the inspector 'The pupils and staff bond together well to make a good, safe school.' Although marking is generally used well to guide pupils towards what they need to

do to improve their work, pupils are not encouraged enough to have their sights on longer term aims because the use of academic targets for pupils is underdeveloped, particularly in mathematics. Health issues are promoted well and procedures for health and safety are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is providing effective and inspiring leadership which is having a significant impact on the forward development of the school. He has established a very positive ethos for learning and is highly regarded by all involved parties, including the pupils. He provides a good role model through his high level of commitment to the school and through the example of his own good teaching. All members of staff have a good understanding of the school's needs and a clear vision of how to achieve further improvement. Appropriate self-evaluation and monitoring strategies are in place. These ensure that the school is clear about where it has to improve next. The most recent school improvement plan, which was drawn up in consultation with staff, governors, parents and pupils, is a good reflection of what needs to be tackled. For example, raising standards in mathematics and refining assessment and target setting strategies are developmental targets for the current academic year. As this is a small school, the few teaching staff have a heavy load of subject responsibilities. However, they carry this with knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment. Some responsibilities have only recently been allocated, however, and it is too soon to judge the effect which subject management, for example, is having on standards.

Although governance is currently satisfactory, largely because of recent changes in membership, individual governors, including the highly proactive and knowledgeable chair, play a significant role in supporting the school's forward development. They carry out focused monitoring visits, such as when they looked at the quality of pupils' writing, and feed back their findings to the full governing body. The chair regularly helps in school, effectively supporting both teachers and administrative staff.

In the relatively recent past, the school suffered from a deficit budget. This situation has now been resolved and strategies are in place for efficient budgeting monitoring.

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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	3

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?	2
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	2
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	2
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 me so welcome at your school. You told me that you like your school very much. I enjoyed my visit and now want to share with you what I thought about your school, which is providing you with a satisfactory education.

- Here are some of the things I especially liked:
- You are well behaved which means that the school is a safe and happy place.
- You enjoy your education and are keen to do well.
- You are well cared for, guided and supported.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to help the school get even better and it is already an improving school.

Here are some of the things I have suggested to help the school get even better:

- I think that teachers could use the information they have on how well you are doing a bit better to make sure you get the right kind of work to do
- You could do even better at mathematics to reach the kind of standards you are achieving in English.

With best wishes