



Cheselbourne Village School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113663
Local Authority Dorset
Inspection number 289688
Inspection date 14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Bradley Simmons HMI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Cheselbourne
School category	Community		Dorchester
Age range of pupils	4-9		DT2 7NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01258 837306
Number on roll (school)	31	Fax number	01258 837306
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	David Stevens
		Headteacher	Ann Herridge
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cheselbourne Village School is situated in rolling Dorset countryside. It is one of the smallest schools in the country. The teaching staff comprises one full-time headteacher, supported by three part-time teachers and three teaching assistants. There are only two classes. The youngest class contains Reception and Year 1 and 2 children. The older class is for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils. The school has recently rationalised its staffing to secure its future.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cheselbourne is a good school with a number of outstanding features. The strong leadership of the headteacher has secured steady improvement over the past few years, and children get a good deal. This school knows its strengths and is aware, through excellent self-evaluation, of those areas which need more work. All teachers within this small school have leadership roles and contribute with enthusiasm to school improvement.

The headteacher keeps the quality of teaching and learning very rigorously and regularly under review. Her view of teaching at the school is accurate; teaching is good overall. A few parents expressed concern that the reception children do not receive enough direct input from their teachers over the course of each week. Reception children do at present receive short, highly effective teaching sessions but they need more if provision for them is to be good rather than satisfactory. The school is aware of this, and is already working to improve matters. The teaching of basic skills is good, but the assessment of phonics lacks the precise detail necessary to determine pupils' exact learning needs as they move through the school.

In other areas, the tracking of individual pupils' progress is detailed, rigorous and demonstrates clearly the impact of this strong teaching; all pupils make good progress during their time at the school. By the time they leave at the end of Year 4, they have over the past few years attained standards which are well above those normally expected. Most pupils do not, however, meet the same standards in handwriting as they do in other subjects. The school agrees there is room for improvement here. Parents of children with learning difficulties are delighted with the help and support their children receive and the good progress they make.

Behaviour was also an area of concern in a small number of parent questionnaires. During this inspection, it was clear that there are a small number of children with challenging behaviour. They are effectively handled by the school and, academically as well as socially they make good progress. Most importantly, they do not appear to interrupt the progress of others and no child expressed any other view than saying they feel safe and happy at school.

The real bonus for parents and pupils is the outstanding provision for personal development and well-being of pupils. Pupils' stamina and love of exercise is developed during daily fitness breaks, and they know what constitutes a good diet – the cornerstone of healthy lifestyles in later life. Pupils get on well with each other. They love the opportunities that the school gives them through its broad and rich curriculum. One pupil said, 'This is a fun school!', and others agreed. Care and support for pupils is good. Marking is very diagnostic across the school, and is a strong and very useful source of evidence in judging pupils' progress. It does not give enough guidance to older children on how they can improve their work.

The school is extremely well placed to continue its course of improvement, whilst continuing to ensure that children have fun in this enviable small school atmosphere.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of reception children by achieving a more equitable balance of teacher time for all three year groups in the younger class.
- Sharpen the assessment of phonics so that pupils' learning needs in this area are more precisely met as they move through the school.
- Improve standards in handwriting.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment when they start school varies from year to year, but overall, is above average. They make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress as they move through the school so that, by the end of Year 2, they attain standards that are comfortably above, and at times significantly above, national averages. This good progress continues during their last two years at the school, so that when pupils transfer to middle schools at the end of Year 4 they are attaining standards that are well above those normally expected.

Boys' attainment is slightly lower than girls, particularly in writing; this reflects their lower starting points when they start school. Nevertheless, from their lower starting points, boys do make as much progress as girls and still exceed national expectations by the end of Year 4.

Handwriting standards are in line with national expectations, but the school knows that this is the weakest area of pupils' performance in literacy, and agrees that they are capable of better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. The school deserves its Healthy Schools award. Pupils have a very clear awareness of what constitutes a healthy diet. The school has concentrated very successfully in raising the level of physical activity undertaken by pupils. In addition to excellent provision for physical education and extra-curricular sports clubs, pupils have 10 minute 'fitness breaks' daily when heartbeats are raised for at least three minutes.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies provide times for reflection. Behaviour is good overall; a small number of parents and pupils are correct to perceive that there are a few challenging children at the school, but staff handle them well, they make good progress, and do not interfere with the progress or well-being of others. Pupils said that there was no bullying and that they feel safe at the school. The rate of attendance is now well above the national average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils make a strong contribution to community life. They take part in the majority of activities organised by the local schools' partnership, have duties as monitors and

grow vegetables to sell to raise money for school funds. Pupils take part in a weekly savings scheme, work well in pairs and teams, and have an all-round high level of confidence. These factors combine with the good academic start pupils get at Cheselbourne to augur extremely well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, and underpin the good, and sometimes outstanding, progress made by pupils. All teachers have good subject knowledge which they use effectively to plan lessons that are always interesting and often fun. Teachers direct well-pitched questions to individual pupils which challenge and extend thinking. Pupils get a good level of individual attention at this school, with the exception of reception children. This is not a question of staff competence; reception children get short bursts of highly effective teaching, but direct teacher input across Reception and Years 1 and 2 is, as the school knows, not yet correctly balanced. Teaching for Reception is nevertheless satisfactory, and the school is using its best efforts and drawing on support from the local authority to improve it to the same high level as that seen across the rest of the school.

The assessment of pupils' phonic understanding is not rigorous enough to pinpoint the exact needs of individuals, though other systems for tracking pupils' performance are very comprehensive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Cheselbourne offers a broad and rich curriculum. The school makes the best use of its location, staff expertise and the input from the local schools partnership to offer pupils a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. For example, a class walk around the village using the digital camera to take photographs of buildings led to planned opportunities to explore shape in mathematics, the texture and use of clay in art, as well as local geography. Visiting teachers provide opportunities to learn the recorder or guitar, and to take part in gymnastics competitions. A judiciously selected programme of curricular visits including, for example, a visit to a mosque in Bournemouth, supports pupils' understanding of life beyond the village in more multi-ethnic areas. The school is rightly redesigning the curriculum for younger pupils with the aim of maintaining good progress in Years 1 and 2, whilst accelerating the progress currently made by reception children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for the care, support and guidance of pupils is good overall. Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet current regulations. There is an excellent emphasis

on ensuring that health and safety checks are regularly made and that improvements follow where necessary. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory overall. Older pupils lack a clear awareness of their personal academic targets in literacy and numeracy. Marking provides an excellent diagnostic record of what pupils know and can do in writing and mathematics. It does not, however, give clear guidance to older pupils as to the steps they need to take to improve their work or extend their learning. Targets for pupils with learning difficulties are sometimes too general and are not consistently evaluated in those pupils' individual action plans.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This school is well led and managed. The headteacher is experienced and committed and has developed a talented team. She sets a clear direction for the work of the school and all staff play their part in shaping improvements. The performance of the school is exceptionally well monitored, the progress of every individual is carefully tracked and intervention is swift to ensure pupils do not fall behind. Thus all pupils make at least good progress. The headteacher keeps teaching and learning and the curriculum very clearly under review. Formal improvement planning is satisfactory, but it does not always address the most pertinent priorities identified by the school, nor does it contain precise targets that enable governors and parents to hold the school to account for its work. Governors take a clear interest in the life of the school and expect to be kept fully informed. They too play their part in monitoring, making, for example, formal visits to the school to comment upon the provision for younger children, or to report on aspects of health and safety. In this, they achieve a fine balance, never straying beyond their own areas of competence, but adding usefully to the school improvement debate.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2
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	1
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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 so much for the great welcome you gave me when I visited Cheselbourne. It was the smallest school I have inspected and I really enjoyed experiencing the very happy small school atmosphere that you enjoy every day. Cheselbourne is a good school. This will not be a surprise to you, because many of your parents think the same!

These are the things I liked about your school:

- Mrs Herridge has built a great team of staff. They all work very hard to give you a good start to your education.
- You work very hard too, and make good progress at Cheselbourne School.
- You get good teaching at the school, and you think lessons are often fun.
- You know how important it is to eat well and to keep physically fit.
- All the staff take good care of you.

There are always things that good schools can do to become even better, and I asked your teachers to change or improve some things. Firstly, I would like reception children to spend more time with their teacher to make sure they learn as quickly as Year 1 and Year 2. Secondly, I would like you all to think about improving your handwriting. I know you can do better with this.

Thank you once again for the help you gave me. I wish I had come in the summer so that I could have bought some of the vegetables you grow!