

Frome Valley CE VA First School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 113763 |
| Local Authority | Dorset |
| Inspection number | 289717 |
| Inspection date | 22 January 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Diane Wilkinson |

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

| | |
|---|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 100 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mike Cullingham |
| Headteacher | Helen Boyce |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 January 0001 |
| School address | School Drive Crossways Dorchester DT2 8WR |
| Telephone number | 01305 852643 |
| Fax number | 01305 852643 |

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Age group | 4–9 |
| Inspection date | 22 January 2008 |
| Inspection number | 289717 |

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: progress in writing, especially of the higher attaining pupils and the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The inspector also investigated significant strengths in the quality of academic support and guidance. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, analysis of school tracking and assessment data and discussions with the headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator, members of the governing body and pupils. The views of parents were gathered from the returns of the Ofsted and the school's own questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's self assessment is not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Frome Valley is a small village first school. It moved to a new building 18 months ago when it also changed its name from Owermoigne First School. The school is growing in popularity and runs breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs. Most pupils are from a White British background with none at the early stage of learning English. A growing number join the school after the Reception Year. Attainment on entry differs from year to year although it is generally around the level expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but varies significantly between year groups. The school holds a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Basic Skills Quality Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

In this outstanding school, pupils make very good progress because of the high quality provision, including in the Foundation Stage. Of particular note are the consistently excellent teaching seen in all year groups and the way that pupils are involved in checking on their own learning and helping to identify how they can improve. Parents recognise this, and one wrote, 'The school brings out the best in my child; she comes home full of what she has learnt and grows in confidence'. Pupils themselves love coming to school. They say teachers help them to do well and make learning fun. Achievement is very good and by the time pupils leave in Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above those expected for pupils of this age. Any variation in standards is due to lower standards on entry.

Due to outstanding work by the deputy headteacher, assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is excellent. This ensures lessons are planned to meet the needs of those working at different levels exceptionally well. Highly challenging activities, a rigorous pace and constant checking on pupils' understanding ensures that learning is especially good. Teaching assistants support learning very well, particularly for pupils with specific needs. The high quality support these pupils receive ensures their progress is very good. Advice to pupils on how to improve, including through marking, is excellent and an outstanding feature of this is pupils' involvement in the process. For example, pupils' improvement targets are broken down into small steps in each lesson so that they can easily judge how good their progress is and what they should do next. Consequently, pupils have an excellent understanding of how well they are doing. This, together with their very good development of basic literacy and numeracy skills, means pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future economic well-being.

The good curriculum has some significant strengths. Enrichment, enhanced by links with other local schools, is excellent. The school has adapted the new national strategies for literacy, numeracy and the development of reading skills exceptionally well to meet the needs of its pupils. However, the school correctly recognises that more opportunities could be planned for pupils to use their basic skills, especially for writing, by linking different subjects for some activities.

This is a very caring school where rigorous attention is paid to pupils' health and safety. Child protection and staff vetting arrangements fully comply with regulations. Pastoral support and guidance are excellent and one parent put the views of many when writing, 'I believe the school and teachers care greatly for all the children and care not just about their education, but also about their emotional well-being and becoming confident, happy children'. Pupils feel very safe and happy in school and have an excellent awareness of how to keep healthy and safe. They are very caring and supportive of others, demonstrated through their support for various charities and the outstanding relationships they have with one another. Pupils work very well together in lessons, especially with their 'talk partners', which supports their learning exceptionally well. By the time pupils leave, they are confident, caring and thoughtful young people. Despite a few who find it difficult to conform, pupils' behaviour is excellent which ensures very few lessons are interrupted. Attendance is well above average. Through the school council, pupils are exceptionally well involved in all aspects of school life. Participation in community events, especially in conjunction with the Dorchester Area Schools' Partnership, is very good. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent and is fostered well through very effective links with the local church and especially well planned assemblies.

The school's success is due to outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher's excellent leadership and support has helped create a committed team of staff and governors who are working very effectively to provide a high quality and well-rounded education for each pupil. Together they have forged a number of very successful partnerships, especially with parents and the Dorchester area schools, which considerably enhance pupils' learning and welfare. The school is very modest about its success and is determined to do even better, most notably in writing where progress, although good, is not as good as in reading. The success of its strategies is evident in the improving progress in writing this year. Excellent tracking of pupils' progress allows very good programmes to be put in place for those who need extra support. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good and these pupils achieve as well as their classmates. School tracking data indicates higher attaining pupils also achieve very well, although few reached the higher levels in last year's Year 2 national writing tests. This is largely because, in this aspect, standards were below expectations on entry to the school.

The school's commitment to continuous improvement is evident in the outstanding systems in place for its monitoring and development work. This allows areas of relative weakness to be speedily and successfully addressed. Since the move to new accommodation, there have been some budget restraints, but good use is made of financial resources to enhance provision. High quality teamwork supports school development especially well and both staff with management responsibilities and governors provide excellent support in this aspect. An outstanding feature of their work is the subject reviews, where staff work in partnership with governors to analyse in fine detail every aspect of the provision and pupils' progress. As a result, the school has an excellent understanding of how well it is doing and this ensures it is exceptionally well placed to maintain its strengths and improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The excellent provision is very well led and managed, with very effective induction procedures helping children settle in to school well. High quality teaching and learning result in children's very good progress. Last year, virtually all exceeded the standards expected by the time they enter Year 1 except in personal and social development, where standards are below expectations on entry. Assessment of children's progress is excellent and, from the start, they are helped to recognise how well they are doing, providing an excellent foundation for understanding their learning. There is a very good balance of activities led by adults and those where children work independently. Tasks are practical and interesting, but the lack of display boards limits the use of resources to set up a stimulating learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils make as good progress in writing as they do in reading and give them more opportunities to develop their writing skills in other subjects.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

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 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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? | 2 |
| 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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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 | 2 |
| 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

23 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Frome Valley CofE VA First School, Dorchester DT2 8WR

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I very much enjoyed my visit and particularly want to thank the school council who gave up their lunchtime to talk to me. I think your school is excellent and am delighted that you and your parents think it is a great place to be.

- There are many very good things about your school, but these are some of the best.
- Reception children get an especially good start and you make very good progress. By the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above those seen in most schools.
- Your personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and you get on very well together. You are very helpful and considerate and are developing into mature and confident young people.
- You have a very good understanding of how you can improve your work.
- Staff take very good care of you and give you lots of excellent advice and support.
- Your school is exceptionally well led and managed. The leadership of your headteacher is excellent, as is the support she is given by staff and governors.

There is just one thing I have asked the school to improve.

You do well in writing, although not as well as in reading so I have asked staff to try and make progress in writing just as good. One way of doing this is by planning more writing activities in other subjects. You can help by working as hard on writing as you do on reading.

Thank you again for all your help, and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson Lead Inspector