

Durweston CE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113798
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	289725
Inspection date	6 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	125
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Hosford
Headteacher	Neil Tarchetti
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Durweston Blandford Forum DT11 0QA
Telephone number	01258 452277
Fax number	01258 452277

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school, which is smaller than average, serves the village of Durweston and the surrounding area. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds and the majority are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is below the national average. A small number of traveller children attend the school. Almost all the pupils speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils who arrive at or leave the school other than in the Reception class is well above the national average, especially in Key Stage 2, and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is also above average. In the last three years, the school has changed from being a first school to a primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school, with many strengths. It provides good value for money because it is well led and managed and provides pupils with good standards of education and care, particularly for those who are more vulnerable. It is rigorous in evaluating its own performance and accurately judges itself as good.

Children make good progress in the Reception class and in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, a significant number of pupils, especially those who join the school in older year groups, have learning difficulties or disabilities. This means that standards in some year groups vary but, because of very effective teaching, support and assessment systems, they all make good progress from their points of entry. In the current Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are higher than average, although standards in handwriting in Key Stages 1 and 2 are generally below expected levels.

Teaching is good overall, and sometimes it is outstanding. Where it is less effective, it is because not enough use is made of assessment information to plan for the needs of individual pupils in lessons. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which takes good account of the mixed age classes.

Pupils' attitudes towards their learning and to each other are very positive and they thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They are polite and generally well behaved, and the relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. The school takes good care of its pupils, particularly those new to the school or who are vulnerable. Parents overwhelmingly have a high regard for the school; one parent commented that 'the whole school has a lovely friendly community feeling and is a happy and inspiring place'.

The school is well led and managed at all levels and the headteacher provides effective leadership during a time of considerable adjustment for the school as it changes from being a first school to a primary school. All the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and the impact of improved curriculum monitoring is starting to have a beneficial effect on the quality of the provision. Staff work very well together and the governors provide excellent support to the school, particularly with regard to their contribution to strategic planning and development. Senior staff and governors effectively monitor progress and have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement. As a consequence, the school's capacity to improve is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that the strengths in assessing and matching individual pupils' learning needs to lesson planning are consistent throughout the school
- improve the quality of pupils' handwriting.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils make good progress as they move through the school, particularly those who join the school at older ages and with lower standards on entry. In the Reception class, children arrive with standards broadly in line with what is expected for their age and, because of good teaching and support, make good progress so that by the end of their first year in school, most have met or exceeded expectations in all their areas of learning. In Key Stage 1 pupils' progress

continues to be good and overall standards at the end of Year 2 are better than expected for their age in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are above average overall, although the quality of handwriting is not good enough, and this remains the case for some pupils in Key Stage 2.

Due to the change from first school to primary school, the school has not yet had the results of any externally validated tests in Year 6. However, well-analysed data from the school's own detailed assessments and inspection evidence indicates that progress continues to be good throughout Key Stage 2, and standards in Year 6 are above average. Standards in some younger year groups vary, due to the high number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. The school is very good at identifying and supporting such pupils and they make rapid progress from often low starting points to achieve at least average standards for their age, particularly in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good personal development and well-being mean that pupils are active learners and really enjoy being in school. Attendance is good and the very positive attitude that pupils have towards their school is illustrated by one parent, who commented that 'my daughter enjoys school that much that she would like to be there in the holidays'. Pupils are well mannered and relationships between adults and children are exemplary.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show respect to each other and are taught well how to work together and interact socially. Their views are listened to and respected and this is reinforced by the effective promotion of Christian values by the staff. The school council is making a positive contribution to the life of the school, such as in organising the provision of additional resources for breaktimes.

The school is proactive in promoting healthy lifestyles, for example through the Healthy Schools week and the prominence of sporting activities, both in school and as extra-curricular clubs. Pupils make good contributions to the local community with activities such as maypole dancing days and school productions in the village hall. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and teamworking are well taught and the school is developing further opportunities for older pupils to use these in projects which will benefit their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some outstanding features. Particularly effective teaching is illustrated by the excellent relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff. In these lessons, pupils are clear about what they are learning and, because teaching is motivational and they are well supported, they make good progress in their lessons. Teachers manage very well the small number of pupils who demonstrate disruptive behaviour. They use an appropriate range of teaching styles to support the learning, although in a few lessons, planning is not sufficiently focussed on the differing needs of some pupils. Outstanding teaching was observed in the Reception class during the inspection, and in most other classes it was never less than good.

Very good tracking and assessment systems are used very well to accurately identify the progress of pupils and set challenging targets for them. In most classes, this is usefully informing the planning of lessons. The quality of marking is good overall, and sometimes outstanding. In the best examples, teachers develop a written dialogue with pupils about their work and this means that they have a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, for those whose first language is not English and for travellers' children is outstanding. Many of these pupils join the school in year groups other than Reception. The school accurately identifies their needs as soon as they arrive and, with the support of specialist provision from the local authority, rapidly puts in place effective strategies and additional support to help them settle in quickly and catch up with their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned to ensure that statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and Foundation Stage Curriculum are met and that future changes are being proactively prepared for. Curriculum planning takes good account of mixed age classes and ensures that pupils develop skills in a systematic way. For example, the development of phonics teaching is having a very positive impact on progress in reading, and past weaknesses, particularly in boys' reading, are being improved as a result. ICT supports teaching and learning well. A whole-school approach towards curriculum planning ensures the cohesive development of curriculum priorities; this is well illustrated by recent improvements in how problem-solving in mathematics is taught throughout the school.

A suitable range of additional events and activities such as music workshops and an arts week are helping to ensure that all pupils experience an enriched and interesting curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care and support is good, particularly for vulnerable pupils, and academic guidance is very good. Health and safety, child protection and supervision procedures are rigorous and staff are suitably trained in these areas. The school has effective procedures for dealing with racism and the small number of bullying incidents. As a result, pupils feel safe and well supported.

Teaching and support staff are very approachable and know the pupils well. There are particularly effective procedures in place to support newly arrived pupils and those who feel unhappy or insecure. For example, one teaching assistant is a trained counsellor and pupils know that they can talk to her if they have a problem.

Academic guidance is very good because the very effective tracking and assessment systems ensure that pupils have accurate guidance regarding their work and have clear targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall and some aspects, such as the leadership of the headteacher and the support of governors, are excellent. The headteacher, ably assisted by the

assistant headteacher, provides calm and efficient leadership which has ensured that recent significant changes in the structure and staffing of the school have been adopted with the minimum of disruption to the quality of care and pupils' education. Because teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated well by the headteacher, he has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a whole and ensures that suitable priorities for improvement are carefully planned for and effectively delivered. Curriculum management is an emerging strength. Recent changes have been well organised and, because staff work as a coherent team and coordinators monitor learning in their subjects well, developments are well planned to meet challenging targets and result in good improvements, such as in reading.

The governors are highly effective and, because they are well trained, know the school well and are committed to it, they provide an excellent balance between support and challenge to the school. A particular strength is the contribution made by the School Improvement Group to strategic planning and development.

The school is generally well resourced, although the current buildings, which are to be improved shortly, are inadequate for the age range of the pupils. Support staff are well trained and managed, and make a very positive contribution to the life and work of the school.

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
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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

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.

Annex A

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	2
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	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

7 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Durweston CE VA Primary School, Blandford Forum DT11 0QA

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when I visited your school. I really enjoyed seeing some of your lessons, talking to you and the grown-ups, and looking at the work that you have been doing. You told me that you really enjoy coming to school and your parents and carers are very pleased with how you are taught and cared for.

I think that yours is a good school with a number of strengths. You get on very well with the teachers and teaching assistants and they give you lots of interesting lessons. Because you are keen to do well, you make good progress. I was particularly impressed with how well those of you who are new to the school are helped to settle in, and how well those of you who find learning difficult are supported. Most of you behave well in lessons and are very kind to each other in the playground. Well done!

The school works hard to provide you with lots of interesting things to do and learn and the grown-ups make sure that you are safe and well cared for. Mr Tarchetti does a good job in leading the school and the staff work well together to improve things even more. The governors do a particularly good job in supporting the school.

There are two things which I have asked the school to improve so that your education can be even better:

- in most of the lessons, what is known about you is used well to plan your learning, but this needs to happen more consistently throughout the school
- some of you need to improve your handwriting.

Thank you again for being so welcoming and friendly!

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye Her Majesty's Inspector