



Clearwell Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115638
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290284
Inspection date 2 October 2006
Reporting inspector Joan Lindsay

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Clearwell
Age range of pupils	4-11		Coleford GL16 8LG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01594 834904
Number on roll (school)	54	Fax number	01594 834904
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Teri Chance
		Headteacher	Chris El-Shawk
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Clearwell School is a much smaller than average primary school, situated in the heart of the village. Most of the pupils live locally, with the majority being from White British heritage and none with a first language which is not English. A smaller than average number of pupils is eligible for free school meals but the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is well above average. The school has had a prolonged period of instability through changes of headteachers and governors but the present headteacher has now been in post for a year.

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 an effective school where pupils reach satisfactory standards of education within a warm and caring environment. There is a strong and supportive family atmosphere which is helped by the school's small size.

Attainment on entry to the school is difficult to generalise because of the very small number of children who start each year but it is slightly below average when several years are considered. Children in the Foundation Stage are taught with pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 and they generally make satisfactory progress so that most are at the expected level when they move to Year 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve standards that are in line with national averages overall, although writing is a weaker area and boys tend not to do as well as girls. This satisfactory progress continues through to the end of Year 6, although boys still tend to do less well than girls overall, and particularly in speaking and listening. This is mainly because most of the pupils who have learning difficulties are boys. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress throughout the school but the more able pupils are not always challenged to make the progress they could.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is a strength of the school. Pupils like coming to school and enjoy their lessons, and especially the extra activities provided for them. They all get on well together. Older pupils take their many responsibilities seriously, such as being house captains, school council representatives and 'Buddies'. They have a positive impact on many aspects of school life. The individual care shown to pupils is another strength as adults know all of them well. Young children starting in the Foundation Stage and older pupils who have moved from other schools settle quickly.

Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory. The school has recently adopted a more creative curriculum in an attempt to better engage boys and pupils say that their lessons are fun. New assessment procedures are in place and teachers are beginning to use these to plan lessons to suit the needs of all pupils. However, there is a need to ensure tasks are suitably challenging for all pupils and that lessons focus very clearly on what precisely is to be learned.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, taking over after a very unsettled period, has put in several new initiatives that are beginning to have an impact, such as the changes to the curriculum, assessment and tracking systems. The school's own self-evaluation is satisfactory. Staff and governors are aware of what needs to be done to improve the school further and now have a satisfactory capacity and strong desire to carry this through. The school has a variety of links with other groups which promote pupils' well-being and learning effectively. These include a small schools' cluster group and strong connections with the church, village and local secondary school. Parents think very highly of the school and appreciate the work being done.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that recently introduced assessment procedures are used robustly to focus on each individual pupil's needs to help all achieve as well as they can, especially the more able,
- improve standards in writing in Key Stage 1 and in speaking and listening in Key Stage 2, particularly for boys
- ensure that all teaching, and the checking of teaching, focuses effectively on precisely what the pupils have to learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Having entered the Foundation Stage with slightly below average standards, pupils then make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Working in a classroom with older pupils helps them to mature and become independent. Satisfactory progress continues in Year 1 and Year 2, with standards at the end of Year 2 broadly average although relatively weaker in writing. Boys do less well than girls, mainly because more boys have difficulties with their learning. The results for 2006 indicate that standards have improved in reading, writing and mathematics but with girls still outperforming boys in writing. From Year 3 to Year 6, satisfactory progress is maintained, with results in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science being broadly in line with national averages although again, boys do not do as well as the girls. In 2006, results improved, with the relative weakness in science reversed and boys performing better, particularly at the higher levels. The targets set for 2006 were met in all three core subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is satisfactory and unauthorised absence is much less than at the previous inspection. Pupils really enjoy being at school and say their lessons are fun. One pupil said, 'I love learning about Tudor pirates!'. Pupils' enjoyment of learning and their good behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes well to their progress. The playground is a very small, sloped area but they manage to play and socialise well despite this. The recent introduction of pupil 'Buddies' has had a very positive impact on how well pupils get on together and also makes them feel safe in school. One boy stated proudly, 'There's no bullying in this school', and all those spoken to express a great deal of confidence in adults. Healthy living has been a recent focus, culminating in the school being given a Healthy Schools award. Despite the considerable constraints of having no hall, playing fields or sizeable playground, events such as the weekly "Welly Walk", using village and other facilities, ensure pupils benefit from regular exercise. Pupils develop satisfactory skills to prepare them for their future and also learn to work well together through strong social development. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is also

good and reflect the general ethos of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of religions and cultures other than their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, reflecting the school's self-evaluation. Teachers use assessment procedures soundly to group pupils in mixed-age classes and to set them work according to their previous learning. This usually ensures that lower-attaining pupils are set appropriately less demanding tasks but there is not always enough challenge for the more able. Too much emphasis is given in some lessons to completing whatever task is set, at the expense of considering how effectively pupils of all abilities are learning. Lessons proceed at a reasonable pace and in an orderly atmosphere, with good relationships evident amongst everyone in the room. A recent focus on speaking and listening has increased the active participation of pupils in their learning, for example through "talking partners". However, opportunities are missed in some lessons to improve the pupils' speaking skills by encouraging them to speak out loud and at length in full sentences.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that results in satisfactory progress and good personal development due to very good enrichment. Children in the Foundation Stage are catered for effectively alongside pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. Despite some improvement to the building since the previous inspection, the school site still poses many difficulties in providing for physical development for all age groups. Nevertheless, good use is made of the village hall and church grounds for indoor and outdoor activities, and the pupils travel to other facilities for swimming and gymnastics. The curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly through the recent provision of equipment and training, although this has not yet had time to impact on standards. A very good range of after-school activities and visits greatly enhances the pupils' learning and personal development, especially the excellent gardening club which enables pupils to experience growing, harvesting, preparing and eating their own fresh vegetables.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The standards of care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The strengths lie in the way adults know and care for the pupils and in providing support for those with behavioural and social needs. These have a positive impact on the pupils' learning and personal development. The school often accepts older pupils who have found a larger school setting difficult but who settle well into the family atmosphere of Clearwell.

All staff are aware of child protection procedures and the school has adopted recent guidelines on safeguarding children. Academic support and guidance is based on a recently implemented system for tracking individual pupils' progress. This is being used with increasing effectiveness to identify pupils who need extra help and those who are gifted or talented. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, have individual targets but these are not yet sufficiently specific, personal or challenging to ensure all pupils achieve their very best.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has established a clear sense of purpose and a detailed manageable plan to guide continuing school improvements. In this small school, the staff have multiple responsibilities, for example for coordinating different subjects or acting as Special Educational Needs Coordinator as well as fulfilling their teaching commitment. Under the circumstances, they carry out all their roles in a satisfactory manner. The headteacher has their full support in taking the school forward. The prolonged disruption to the leadership of the school means that some initiatives are recent and have not yet had time to fully impact on standards. However, green shoots of development are beginning to be seen, such as the better relative performance of boys. The procedures for checking teaching have improved and now give teachers a clear indication of strengths and areas for improvement, although evaluations are not yet sharply enough focused on the learning outcomes for all pupils, especially the more able. The governing body has also undergone a difficult period and, although not yet up to full strength, is now in a much stronger position to play a fully active role in supporting the headteacher. A clear framework has been established for governors to ensure they fulfil all their statutory duties and gain an objective view of how the school is doing.

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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	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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 welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing what you do at school. We liked your new vegetable garden and to see how much you enjoy growing things there.

These are the things we liked most about your school:

- you enjoy school, behave well and get on well together. We think that the older pupils do a very good job, for example as Buddies and House Captains
- adults look after and care for you well – the school feels like a big happy family and you all feel safe there
- you get to make good use of the local facilities to make up for not having much space in the school itself. This means that you can keep fit and healthy
- you have lots of extra interesting things to do and visits to go on so that, for example, you can learn about how other people live.

We think that some of the ways your school could be even better would be if:

- teachers kept a really close check on what everyone is able to do so that those who can do more difficult work, get the chance to do so
- the younger pupils practised their writing a bit more and the older ones had a few more chances to speak in long sentences
- in all your lessons, teachers think hard about what everyone knew at the beginning and how much more they have learned at the end.

So we have asked everyone in the school to try to make sure that these things happen.

We found our short time with you very interesting and we wish all of you well for the future.