

Clifford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116668
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	290585
Inspection date	20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Spreckley
Headteacher	Jeremy Piper
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2003
School address	Clifford Hereford HR3 5HA
Telephone number	01497 831202
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small, popular school serves the village of Clifford and the surrounding area. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. Children enter the school with broadly average levels of knowledge and skills but their spoken language is often well developed. The school has an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. The school has three mixed-age classes at present, but this is to be increased to four next term. Reception children are currently taught with those in Years 1 and 2, but they will be taught separately for the majority of the time when the new class is set up. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Clifford is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. Good leadership and management, in particular by the headteacher, have ensured that school self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate and leads to action. Work completed thus far has moved the school forward very rapidly. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, as are teaching and learning. Pupils in different parts of the school are, however, progressing at different rates, in part because of variability in the quality of teaching they receive. Prior to the headteacher's appointment, standards attained by Year 6 pupils had been falling and, by 2005, had reached a point where they were very low overall. Since that time, standards have been rising. Although still too low in 2006, there was a significant rise compared to the previous year. There has been further improvement for current Year 6 pupils. As a result, standards in English and mathematics are now above average, and those in science are average. Achievement in Year 5 is better still, showing the potential for further improvement. Higher-attaining pupils, in particular, are now doing much better through Years 3 to 6. Those with learning difficulties and difficulties are well supported and make good progress throughout the school.

There remains work to be done, particularly to improve the education of the younger pupils. For children in the Reception Year, the physical restraints of the classroom, together with weaknesses in curriculum planning, mean that current provision is inadequate. Although standards are at the expected level by the end of the year, children are not always fulfilling their potential, given their well-developed language skills on entry. The school has taken action to improve provision from the start of next term. Satisfactory teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are enabling most Year 2 pupils to attain the levels expected for their age. Currently, however, some higher-attaining pupils are not achieving as well as they could, especially in writing.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils in Year 6 are articulate, polite and thoughtful and engage readily with adults and peers alike. The curriculum and the care and guidance of pupils are satisfactory, and have some good features. The curriculum has particular strengths in enrichment activities. Pastoral care is strong, with pupils being known and cared for as individuals. Academic guidance is currently a focus for development. Whilst much improvement is already apparent, there has not been time for this to be fully embedded and pupils are not clear about how to improve their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress of children in the Reception Year.
- Ensure that target setting, marking and feedback to pupils help them know how to improve their work.
- Improve the progress made by higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2, especially in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement overall is satisfactory. Although pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 has been unacceptably poor over recent years, improvement work made a substantial difference in 2006 and raised standards significantly. Progress in Years 3 to 6 continues to accelerate and is now good. High expectations are bearing fruit and all pupils, including the most able, are achieving well. Improvement has been focused on English and mathematics and this is reflected in current

standards. Improvement in science is, however, also apparent. Termly target setting and discussions about progress have raised teachers' expectations of pupils and any underachievement is quickly spotted and acted upon. This work is undertaken throughout the school, but is currently having more impact in improving achievement in Years 3 to 6 than for younger pupils. By the end of the Reception Year, most children attain expected goals, but the curriculum they receive does not capitalise on the good language skills with which they enter the school and thus their progress is inadequate. Standards by the end of Year 2 are a little above average, in part because the school is successful in ensuring that lower-attaining pupils reach the expected standards. Higher-attaining pupils, however, do not always make sufficient progress, particularly in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They are assisted to develop a good understanding of what it means to live in and contribute to a community, through, for example, the work of the school council in making decisions about the purchase of new playground equipment. Cultural awareness is particularly strong, both in pupils' understanding of art and music and in their awareness of the diversity of cultures in Great Britain. Pupils are aware of their own safety, one pupil summing this up by saying that school arrangements make them feel 'safe without being afraid'. They also know the importance of healthy eating and the taking of exercise. Pupils' behaviour is good overall. All pupils behave well around the school. In lessons, behaviour is better in Years 3 to 6 than it is for younger pupils, who are not always sufficiently engaged by the tasks that they are given. As a result of school action, there has been some improvement in attendance over the last year, but the significant number of parents taking holidays in term time remains a persistent problem.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although satisfactory overall, there are differences in the quality of teaching and learning in different classes in the school. Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are good. Here, teachers use regular assessment of pupils to ensure they plan work that stretches each one. They work hard to motivate pupils to want to learn. Although the same strategies are being developed for pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning remain only satisfactory. Teachers and learning support assistants work together to successfully ensure pupils settle well into school and undertake a range of activities. There is not, however, always a specific learning goal for the activities for Reception children and there is sometimes a lack of clear expectation for the achievement of higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2.

In general, pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well. They are given feedback about their work during lessons but marking, although already showing improvements, is not consistently helpful in reinforcing this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There are a number of strong aspects to the curriculum, in particular those that support the personal development of pupils and enrich their experiences. Very well-judged work to improve

the curriculum in English, mathematics and science has been instrumental in the raising of standards as well as in extending and improving provision in art and design. The school provides a wide range of activities additional to the secure basic curriculum, including visits, for example, to the theatre, and visitors to the school. There are a good number of clubs that pupils can join and residential visits further extend their education. The school is beginning to develop cross-curricular work, making the programme more relevant to the pupils. The curriculum for Reception children is inadequate because it is not properly providing for all the recommended areas of learning. The school has already identified this and plans are in place for improvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are very well known and valued as individuals. All staff are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and act promptly to praise or support as required. This, together with secure formal structures for ensuring their health and safety, means that pastoral care is strong. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are nurtured and supported well, so that they make good progress and gain good self-esteem. Targets are set regularly and discussions held with pupils to ensure they are fully involved with the process. Parents are involved so that they understand how best to support their child. This is all very new and not yet having a full effect on pupils' achievement. Additionally, marking is not playing its full part in guiding pupils in how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has provided strong leadership and management in moving the school forward rapidly. School self-evaluation and improvement work has been securely and accurately promoted by the headteacher and the governors and through the judicious use of Local Authority support. This has led to the considerable improvements detailed throughout this report and in particular to the rapid raising of standards amongst pupils in Years 3 to 6. A strong team is developing in which staff at all levels are taking an increasing leadership role. This has actively and effectively supported improvements, such as those seen in art as well as those in English and mathematics. The relatively new governing body is strong and supports the headteacher very well. Governors have good knowledge of the achievement of pupils and have promoted the improvement work. Their careful management of the budget has made the appointment of an additional teacher possible so that provision for Reception children can be improved. The successful and robust way in which weaknesses have been tackled and standards improved indicates good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	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	4
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?	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	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	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	2

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.

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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Mr Bate and I really enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for the friendly way in which you talked to us. We think that your school is giving you a satisfactory education at the moment, but that this is getting better all the time.

The things we particularly liked were:

- the way your headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and governors are working together to make your school better and better
- the progress that those of you who are in Years 3 to 6 are making in English and mathematics
- the mature way in which you talk to each other and to adults
- the wide variety of activities that is available to help you to learn and for you to enjoy
- the care that adults in the school take of you.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to help you make even better progress by:

- changing the way children in Reception are taught
- helping you to know how to improve your work by - giving you clear advice when they mark your work - teaching you how to make good use of the targets that are set for you
- helping some Year 1 and 2 pupils who are quick to learn to do better, particularly with their writing.

We also think that you are very lucky to go to school in such a beautiful place!