



Beckington Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123742
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292770
Inspection date 6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Julia Coop

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

Type of school	First	School address	Beckington
School category	Voluntary controlled		Frome
Age range of pupils	4-9		BA11 6TG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01373 830438
Number on roll (school)	79	Fax number	01373 830438
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Peter West
		Headteacher	D Henson
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school serves the rural village of Beckington and surrounding area. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average but is average in some year groups. Attainment on entry varies each year, but is average overall. There are many more boys than girls in some year groups. The school has achieved Investor in People and Healthy Schools status.

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 school with significant strengths. It is an extremely happy and harmonious school that is truly part of the local community. Parents justifiably hold the school in high regard. The inspection agrees with their comments that the school has a 'friendly and very supportive atmosphere' and 'makes learning fun and relevant'. In particular, parents value the outstanding care, guidance and support their children receive.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and from the time they start in the Reception class, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are treated as individuals and sensitively encouraged. Teaching is good and the pupils say teachers are 'kind and helpful' and have the knack of 'finding different ways to help us when we get stuck'. The pupils also really like the excellent curriculum with its impressive range of additional activities and Forest School, which they say is 'exciting and challenging'. Together with strong Christian values, this helps generate mature, thoughtful and hardworking pupils who really enjoy learning in the well-equipped new school building. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent. The school is also very successful in broadening the pupils' horizons beyond rural Somerset and prepares them extremely well for their future life.

In this very small school, standards vary each year. Nevertheless, pupils achieve well whatever their capabilities. Children make good progress in the Reception class and very good progress in their personal and social development. Standards at the end of Year 4 are above average and exceptionally high in reading. Pupils make good progress throughout the school; however, the school recognises that pupils are not quite as confident using their good numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems.

The school is doing well because of good leadership and management and especially because of the energy and dynamic leadership skills of the headteacher. She is the driving force behind the school's success. She has created a small but hardworking team of staff who support her well. Good support and training have ensured that they have the necessary skills to help the headteacher check on the work of the school. As a result, there is a strong team spirit and the school knows itself well, taking good account of the views of its stakeholders. Consequently, its plans for future development are well thought out. Governors are very supportive and also work hard. They fulfil their statutory duties well. However, they know that some governors are not yet confident to check more closely on the work of the school. The school is forward thinking and benefits from the strong commitment of all staff and governors and from very effective links with external agencies and other schools. It is well placed to build on its success, having sustained and enhanced further the wide range of strengths identified at the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Develop the monitoring role of the governing body.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average, although in this very small school it is not reliable to make year-on-year comparisons. Overall, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress in relation to their capabilities and achieve well in all year groups because of the effective way that the school meets each pupil's individual learning needs. At the end of Year 2 and Year 4, the school's challenging targets are exceeded. Parents agree that the school is helping their children to 'thrive and reach their potential'.

Children make good progress in the Reception class, whatever their starting point, and achieve well. Some children when they start have immature personal and social skills. The school encourages them and provides interesting activities such as Forest School, where children learn outside one morning a week. This successfully helps them become independent and happy learners who make very good gains in their personal and social development.

Throughout the school, pupils do particularly well in reading and reach high standards in this subject at the end of Year 4. Although pupils' basic mathematical skills are good, pupils' problem-solving skills are less well developed. As one pupil stated, 'It's hard to do problems'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The pupils truly live up to the words in the school hymn, 'Kindness matters and it is important to work together', by demonstrating respect and support for each other. Because of the school's excellent curriculum and visitors from other faiths and cultures, the pupils very quickly learn to respect the different cultures in the world, becoming confident, very well-rounded young people by the time they leave.

Pupils without exception say they really enjoy learning; their happy smiling faces around the school are a testament to this. They say the school is 'great' and all are very proud of their 'small friendly school'. They are very polite and behave exceptionally well. One parent summarised the enthusiasm shown by pupils, saying, 'My child literally runs to school because they really enjoy the work'. As a result, attendance is excellent.

Pupils willingly take a great deal of responsibility for aspects of school life, with the school council and 'hat people' working very hard to help the school and other pupils, for example, running a cake and toy stall to raise funds for a quiet garden or for Rufus their guide-dog puppy. In addition, the way that pupils relish the opportunity to play music for the old-aged pensioners, organise recycling boxes and collect shoes for people in Africa demonstrates their maturity, consideration and excellent community spirit.

Pupils are extremely confident about making safe decisions and have an impressive understanding of healthy lifestyles, ensuring they bring healthy lunchboxes. They not only understand the need for 'five a day' and enjoy eating fruit and vegetables, but are also aware that they need to eat 'rice, pasta and brown bread for energy' and to go to bed at a 'reasonable time to rest our brains'. By Year 4, pupils are very well prepared for the move to the next school, the only problem being 'having to leave a school they love'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a good sense of teamwork in the school, with everyone working well together for the benefit of pupils. Together with good support from skilled teaching assistants and part-time teachers, this effectively aids learning. Teachers are becoming more confident to use interactive whiteboards to make learning relevant, which the pupils say 'helps us learn in an interesting way'. The school uses every nook and cranny to ensure that small groups of pupils can work together quietly, away from the main class if needed. The outside area is also used well and the pupils particularly enjoy learning in the school grounds or 'farmer's field'.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are valued members of the class and when needed receive sensitive and effective additional support. Teachers' use of praise and encouragement ensures all pupils try hard to complete the tasks and to improve. However, sometimes, pupils say that they spend too much time sitting and listening to the teacher which means they don't always have time to finish a task, although they do have time to finish the next day.

A common strength in teaching is the effective way that lessons are planned for the multi-age groups and the way teachers carefully match tasks to meet pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers are sensibly finding new ways to develop pupils' problem-solving skills, particularly in mathematics. Parents are very happy in the progress their children are making; as one parent stated, 'It is a testament to the way that teachers use an individualised approach to work which is always adapted to my child's needs'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is varied and rich, with an excellent balance that enhances both academic and personal development. Designed to meet individual needs, the school is very successful in ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged through activities such as Brain Academy, which the pupils say 'really stretches us', while pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities get the right sort of help. Topics and special days, such as a recent Caribbean day, make learning relevant and enjoyable and help expand the pupils' horizons. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities for a

small school, such as first aid, gymnastics and woodwork, which are so popular there is a waiting list. In addition, French and numerous visits and visitors enrich pupils' experiences outstandingly well. The Reception children have lots of opportunities to learn through practical, first-hand experiences. The Forest School is also a very successful vehicle to develop teams and promote cooperative working, as well as a love of nature. As a result of the school's very strong focus on improving pupils' confidence, citizenship and decision-making skills, pupils are exceedingly well prepared for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Individual pupils are extremely well known to staff, who work in very close partnership with outside agencies, parents and pupils themselves to ensure that all progress well and enjoy their education. This creates an atmosphere where pupils are helped enormously to develop socially and emotionally. Child protection measures are robust and very detailed risk assessments ensure safety on visits and other activities. Academic guidance is effective. Pupils like checking on their own learning at lessons' end and work hard to achieve their targets. There is a healthy sense of competition as pupils move their 'target hands along the line'. Individual pupil conferences at the end of Year 4 help prepare pupils very well for the move to their new school. Parents value the way that the 'staff put huge amounts into the welfare of children' which helps children 'thrive'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's impact is excellent and, despite a considerable teaching commitment and a heavy load of responsibility, she very successfully drives the work of the school. She provides dynamic leadership and inspires her small team of colleagues in their drive to continue to improve the quality of the school's provision. She is ably supported by other key staff. They are developing their management skills well because they are receiving good support and training. Since all staff have many responsibilities, they are sensibly focusing on checking and developing one subject area each year. The school obtains a wealth of data through its good monitoring and evaluation procedures which it uses well to plan improvements. Consequently, it has maintained the good standards identified in the last inspection and recognises the need to target aspects of mathematics. Governance is good. All governors are very supportive. Financial management is astute and it is due to their efforts that considerable funds have been raised to improve the school building. Consequently, the school has been able to successfully expand the curriculum, which has added enormously to the pupils' enjoyment of learning and to the breadth of their achievement. Governors visit the school regularly and some have subject links, but they recognise that they are not all confident to work with the subject leaders to check on the quality of teaching and learning.

The school successfully promotes a strong sense of community and takes good account of parents' and pupils' views. Parents speak highly of its work and the hard work of the headteacher and staff, who they recognise have ensured that the school is a 'special place to learn'.

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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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

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	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	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

I liked the mature and very friendly way you chatted to me when I visited. Thank you so much for being extremely polite and helpful. I really enjoyed seeing your smiling faces around the school. I agree with you that Beckington is a good school. I was particularly impressed with your healthy lunchboxes and how you have become very caring young people. These are the things I liked most:

You try hard in lessons and really enjoy learning. You are very confident and sensible and you behave extremely well. Your teachers help you learn well and you do very well in reading. You have an excellent curriculum and lots of visits and visitors which help you learn. Your school council and that people work very hard. Everyone takes very good care of you. The headteacher works very hard and staff and governors help her to lead and manage the school well.

I know that all of you see your school as a special place to learn but there are two things that I want the staff and governors to do to make Beckington even better, and they agree with me:

- Help you become more confident to solve problems in mathematics.
- Make sure that governors look at how well you are doing and use this information to help the school do even better.

I hope you go on trying hard and enjoying all of the interesting activities which help you learn and play.