



Horsington Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123763
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292779
Inspection date 22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Geoff Burgess

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

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|---|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Horsington |
| School category | Voluntary controlled | | Templecombe |
| Age range of pupils | 4-11 | | BA8 0BW |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01963 370358 |
| Number on roll (school) | 105 | Fax number | 01963 370117 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mindy Lucas |
| | | Headteacher | Ian Rumbelow |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 July 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school built to serve the Blackmore Vale area of Somerset, including the village of Horsington, several hamlets and outlying farms. More than half of the pupils come from other villages and from Wincanton. The number on roll has risen in each of the past four years and with the school virtually full, there is increasing pressure on places and on the accommodation. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and few are entitled to free school meals. The percentage of pupils identified by the school as having learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than usual. Many of these pupils have moved to Horsington Primary from other schools. With small numbers starting school each year, the attainment of children in the reception group can vary greatly. In most years, however, it is broadly as found in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, much appreciated by parents and pupils, who are generous and eloquent in their praise of the head and staff. One parent writes, 'They give the children the confidence to spread their wings and the coping mechanisms to deal with the huge step to secondary school'. Another describes the head as 'dynamic, warm and resourceful' while Year 6 pupils say that, 'All our teachers are the best'. Inspectors agree with all these views. Outstanding leadership and management have created a school with a very high reputation locally which provides an excellent education for all pupils. However, rising numbers in the school's limited accommodation mean that improving on this very high quality of provision is becoming ever more difficult. Despite this, the school has fashioned a high quality learning environment in which staff and pupils are able to develop and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Nothing is taken for granted and the school is constantly trying to innovate and improve.

Its main strength lies in the richness and depth of the education it provides and the resulting outstanding progress and personal development and well-being of its pupils. It provides an outstanding curriculum from the Foundation Stage onwards, which leads to pupils achieving high standards in areas such as the arts and the humanities as well as in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Parents and pupils are delighted with all the extra activities provided and the fact that children are 'introduced to as many new experiences as possible' in class. Awareness of health, fitness, safe practice and community responsibilities is built into the curriculum, the ethos and the fabric of the school. It is a way of life for the school community. The quality of care, support and guidance is outstanding and parents are especially pleased that all staff are so approachable and helpful. Mutual respect is a feature of all relationships.

The impact of all this positive provision can be seen in the enthusiastic, mature and confident way pupils go about their work and play. They say they love school and their parents agree. Outstanding teaching featuring interesting and challenging activities builds on this very positive attitude to learning so that achievement is outstanding in English, mathematics, science and several other subjects. This is greatly helped by the very high quality of the academic guidance and support provided by the school's very rigorous assessment arrangements. The relatively high number of pupils needing extra help who join the school after the Foundation Stage benefit especially from these arrangements. Most make very good progress. However, with small numbers involved in each year group, standards can be significantly reduced by the presence of even one such pupil. Overall standards are above average and well above in the current Year 6. A parent sums it all up well when she says that, 'Teachers' dedication and success is evident for all to see and I feel lucky that my children have had the fortune to attend such a unique and special school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to find ways in which the accommodation can be developed so that its limitations do not inhibit this growing school's plans to make the excellent education it provides even better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding but, as in most smaller schools, standards are much affected by the balance of abilities in the small year groups. Since the last inspection in 2002, standards achieved by pupils in Year 6 were close to average until 2005 when, with several lower attainers in the group, they fell to well below in English and science. However, over the same period, standards in Year 2 rose to their highest ever levels, significantly above average. In 2006, almost all Year 6 pupils reached very challenging targets to achieve the school's best ever national test results in mathematics and science. Pupils' current work and school records show that the current Years 5 and 6 are well on the way to achieving even more challenging targets in all three subjects.

Achievement as measured by national tests fell from above average in 2003 to below in 2005. Actions to remedy this situation saw achievement back above average in 2006. Observation and analysis during the inspection showed that pupils are now making outstanding progress in all four classes thanks to the high quality of teaching, the curriculum and academic guidance. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve the early learning goals in good time and pupils with learning difficulties all achieve their challenging individual learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has very high expectations for its pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour. A parent notes that pupils are 'happy, confident and secure'. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The 'Golden Rules' which emphasise thinking of others, thoughtfulness and kindness, thus underpinning the strong Christian ethos of the school, are adhered to routinely. Pupils' willingness to engage in the spiritual activity of prayer has been noted as unique. Realising that it is in an isolated rural mono-cultural setting, the school does a very good job in making pupils aware of other cultures. Great emphasis is placed on learning life skills and this produces pupils who are eloquent, confident and mature. Behaviour is exemplary in the playground and in lessons. All pupils feel secure enough to discuss issues informally or within class circle times. Older pupils are regularly asked their opinions on aspects of school life and are responsible for organising charity events. All pupils have had a great impact on making their indoor and outdoor environment a most attractive place to be. Pupils are keenly aware of healthy lifestyles and good diets. The value and enjoyment of sport has a high priority in the school and levels of participation in sporting activities are high despite the lack of indoor facilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching observed in the school matched the high quality expected, given the excellent progress pupils have made recently, as shown in the school's records and by current work. All lessons were characterised by the thought and creativity which had been used in planning activities which would engage and motivate all pupils. Every effort is made to make learning fun. Very good use is made of teaching assistants and all available resources. Very well used interactive whiteboards make an excellent contribution to focusing attention and sustaining the high pace which teachers set. Expectations for behaviour and speed of working are high, with time targets set and kept. Learning is greatly enhanced by pupils' own contributions and by the way teachers involve pupils in developing ideas and strategies through open-ended questions. Assessment arrangements are a model of good practice and very well used to monitor progress and modify teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Parents and pupils agree with the school that the curriculum is 'engaging and rich'. The Foundation Stage curriculum gives pupils an excellent start in school. Stimulating and innovative activities meet the needs of all the learners in the school. A parent comments, 'Class activities are varied and exciting, leading to many funny and happy conversations at home!' Many visitors and visits ensure a wide range of interests is met, as shown in work with the National Trust. Outstanding use is made of the environment. The many clubs provide excellent extra-curricular opportunities, which has been recognised by an Education Extra Award. Pupils have the opportunity to learn foreign languages and specialist teachers provide high quality activities in music, art and sport. However, with increasing numbers, the limited space available can make providing practical activities a challenge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A parent sums this area up well: 'The level of care that is given to the children is exceptional, it is very much their school. As a result the children are confident, responsible and respectful'. Requirements to keep pupils safe and secure, such as child protection and health and safety checks, are very rigorous. All pupils are extremely well cared for and those with extra learning needs have excellent support during the school day. Strong links with outside agencies help to ensure these pupils make excellent progress. Pupils know how to improve their work from the very good feedback they receive from their teachers and the challenging individual learning targets they are set. User- friendly curriculum and behaviour booklets show parents how they can support their children's learning. Academic guidance is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The popularity of the school, the very high regard in which it is held by parents and pupils, and the high standards noted in all the preceding sections of this report are all testament to the exceptional leadership and management the school has experienced in recent years. To quote a parent, all the staff 'work together as an amazing team, constantly looking for ways to improve the school – all done with a wonderful sense of humour and spirit'. Very well supported by the governing body, the staff team continue to build on the strongest of foundations, challenging accepted thinking and setting ever-higher targets for themselves and their pupils. The school's capacity to improve is undiminished.

The headteacher's contribution to the undoubted success of the school is outstanding. His ability to create an environment which brings the best out of both adults and children has been remarkable. A notable feature of this, given the relatively isolated position of the school, is the way he looks outside the school and the immediate area for ideas, support and information. Self-evaluation based on the most rigorous of monitoring procedures is at the core of everything. The school's current and longer-term plans show just how clear his ambition and shared vision for the school remain.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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? | 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

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| 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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 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 | 1 |
| 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

We would like to thank you all very much for the wonderful way you welcomed us to your school. Both of us were very impressed with the mature and sensible way you all move around the school and get on with your work. When we talked to you, we thought you were very good at expressing your point of view and just as good at listening to others. We know you think your school is 'the best'. We agree – we think it is outstanding and a credit to you and all the adults who make it so good.

This is what we liked most about your school:

- You behave very well, enjoy learning, work hard and always do your best.
- You are good at all sorts of things like art and music as well as reading, writing and mathematics.
- We know you agree with us that your teachers are fantastic at making the things you do in class interesting and fun to do. They make sure you learn really well.
- You enjoy having lots of opportunities to do extra and different things outside lessons.
- The buildings and grounds have been turned into an attractive place for you to work and play in.
- You and all the grown-ups make everyone welcome at the school and include them in all there is going on.
- You know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- All the grown-ups are working hard to make sure your time in school is as happy and positive as possible. We know you appreciate all that they do for you.
- Your headteacher is really good at making it possible for everyone to do their best.

We know your teachers have lots of plans to make your school even better and we're sure that you will help them by making suggestions and offering any help you can give. We hope it will be possible to find a way to improve the buildings so you and your teachers will have more and better space to work in.