

Mells Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123767
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292781
Inspection date	22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Mitchell
Headteacher	David Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002
School address	Mells Green Mells Frome BA11 3QE
Telephone number	01373 812380
Fax number	01373 813523

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mells CE First School is a very small primary school located in an idyllic Somerset setting. The vast majority of pupils come from a White British background. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is also below average. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class is above national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mells CE is a good school with outstanding aspects to its work. Pupils achieve well and their personal development is outstanding. Parents hold very positive views about the school. They are delighted with the care and education provided and give the school strong support. They particularly praise the school's approachability and very positive atmosphere. Parental comments include: 'We are extremely pleased with Mells First School', 'Staff treat children as individuals' and 'My children are very fortunate to attend this school'.

Effective leadership and management contribute considerably to the school's success. An experienced and established headteacher provides strong leadership and direction. He is highly regarded by pupils, parents and staff. The pupils told inspectors, 'Our head is great, he makes learning fun.' Other leadership responsibilities have been effectively shared among the staff in this small school. The school knows what it does well and has taken effective action to bring about improvements in most areas. Teamwork among the staff is a strong feature and all staff are committed to ensuring that pupils do as well as they can.

Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute significantly to pupils' academic and personal development. In this very positive school community, all pupils are valued. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected by their good attendance. Clear expectations and very good relationships lead to good behaviour. Pupils show an exceptionally good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Assessment is used well to plan teaching and to set individual learning targets in English and mathematics so pupils know what they are working on in order to improve.

Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved significantly since the last inspection and children in Reception get off to a good start. They make good gains in all areas of learning. Good teaching and learning enable pupils to make good progress as they move through the school. Standards are well above average by Year 2 although standards have been stronger in reading and writing than in mathematics. Pupils have good opportunities to apply and develop their literacy skills in other subjects but they do not have enough opportunities for practical investigative work in mathematics, nor to apply and develop numeracy skills in other subjects. The school is taking positive action to raise achievement in mathematics in Years 1 and 2, and there are signs of improvement. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4 and standards by the end of Year 4 are well above average. A good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities. Provision for art and design and music are clear strengths. At Mells, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to carry out investigative work in mathematics and to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Children in Reception make good progress and reach standards above those expected in all areas of learning. Standards in Year 2 are above average in mathematics and well above average in reading and writing. Progress is not as good in

mathematics as in reading and writing because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use and apply numeracy skills in a variety of situations. The school has made this a priority for improvement in Years 1 and 2, and early indications are that the picture is improving. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make good progress and standards are well above average when they leave. Pupils have acquired a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills and use these well to support their learning in different subjects. Art and design is also a strength across the school with some impressive displays of coloured digital photo images in the style of Andy Warhol. Work in clay is imaginative and of high quality. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the effective support provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are enthusiastic and participate very well in all aspects of school life. They are reflective and show great appreciation for works of art and music. Pupils are friendly and show consideration and respect for others. High expectations and very good relationships give rise to pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy diets and the need to take regular exercise. Those on the school council serve their fellow pupils well and have organised events including fund raising activities. Pupils are very well prepared for their future economic well-being because by the time they leave they have acquired very good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. In addition to this, their personal and social skills are extremely well developed. As one parent wrote, 'Mells School has given my child a good foundation on which to develop.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Effective teaching and learning contribute significantly to pupils' good achievement. Teaching in the Foundation Stage provides a good blend of direct teaching and opportunities for children to choose, be creative and work independently. Across the school, teachers make sure that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn each lesson. Teachers' clear instructions, explanations and demonstrations promote learning well. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss their work. Consequently, pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. Skilful questioning by teachers challenges pupils' thinking and clarifies their understanding. Assessment and tracking of pupils' performance is effective. Assessment is usually used effectively to match tasks to pupils' different abilities and needs. As a result, pupils are challenged well, their interest is maintained and they make good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who need it. The marking of pupils' work recognises good work, however, comments to help pupils improve are sometimes lacking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve well and contributes exceptionally well to their personal development. Good emphasis on literacy skills and the good opportunities for pupils to apply and develop these in other subjects contribute to the consistently high standards in reading and writing. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have insufficient opportunities to use and apply numeracy skills in different subjects and this is one of the reasons why progress in mathematics is not as

good. Interesting links between subjects add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 used their ICT and independent study skills extremely well in history to produce high quality projects on Tutankhamun. Provision for music is good with all pupils in Years 3 and 4 learning the guitar and violin. A successful residential visit to Plymouth for pupils in Year 4 provides interesting water sport activities and effectively develops team building skills. A good range of clubs is offered including cricket, football, pottery and recorders. The most popular club, 'Bibles and Buns' is an important link with the church. Health and personal safety education receive very good attention with good initiatives such as 'Keeping Healthy Week'. The improved Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good range of stimulating activities to promote good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding pastoral care and support contribute exceptionally well to pupils' personal development. Within this harmonious community, pupils respond extremely well to the school's care and rewards. An effective partnership with Mells Nursery means that the transition into Reception is smooth and children settle quickly. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are highly effective so pupils are safe and secure at school. Staff have established very good relationships with pupils and their parents. As a parent commented, 'The staff know all the pupils and make themselves accessible and available should the children have any worries. The headteacher and business manager have always been tremendously helpful.' Assessment information is used well to set challenging individual learning targets in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils know what they are aiming for in order to improve their performance in these subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are successfully promoting good pupil achievement and outstanding personal development. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is extremely well respected by pupils and parents. With his staff, he has created a positive school climate and has developed an outstanding partnership with parents. Curriculum responsibilities are effectively shared among the teaching force and evaluation skills are being developed so that all leaders contribute effectively to monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility.

The school has been modest in assessing its own performance so not all areas of self-evaluation are sufficiently sharp. However, the school has a clear overview of its strengths and areas in need of improvement. Teaching and learning are effectively monitored and developed by senior staff and the local authority. School development planning is effective and has contributed to the improvements. Since the last inspection, standards in writing have improved from above average to well above average and provision in the Foundation Stage has improved from satisfactory to good. Pupils' very positive personal development has been maintained. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve.

The business manager is efficient, which enables the headteacher and teachers to focus on pupils' achievement and educational provision. The governors are committed, supportive and have a clear understanding of the school's performance.

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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?	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	1
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	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	1
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	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?	2
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.

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Mells Church of England First School, Mells, Somerset, BA11 3QE

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found out. Mells is a good school and one you can be proud of.

These things are strengths of the school:

- You clearly enjoy school and this is shown by your good attendance and your keen involvement in school activities.
- Those of you in Reception get off to a good start.
- Teaching is good, which is why you learn so much.
- You are making good progress particularly in reading and writing.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on very well with others.
- The school offers interesting learning activities and a good range of additional clubs and visits.
- You show an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping healthy.
- Opportunities for music are strong and your artwork on display is impressive.
- You receive outstanding care and support from the staff.
- The school is well led by your headteacher and other staff.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school and give it good support.

There is one thing the school has been asked to improve:

- Some of you in Years 1 and 2 could make more progress in mathematics by having more opportunities to solve problems and use numeracy skills in other subjects.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector