



Stogumber Church of England VC First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123774
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292786
Inspection date 16 January 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Burghart

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

Type of school	First	School address	Station Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Stogumber
Age range of pupils	4-9		TA4 3TQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01984 656311
Number on roll (school)	18	Fax number	01984 656311
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	A Deane
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small rural school shares its headteacher with another small school in the next village of Crowcombe. Both schools are overseen by the same governing body and both were inspected on the same day as part of a pilot coordinated inspection, which resulted in two separate reports.

At Stogumber the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties varies each year but overall is about average. All pupils are White British. Currently there are three children in Reception but last year there was only one. Children's ability and experience on first joining the school are broadly average but vary widely year on year in very small age groups.

In addition to the headteacher there are two full-time members of staff, both of whom were appointed in this academic year. The school holds the Healthy School and Eco-friendly Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school successfully contributes to, and benefits from being part of, a federation with Crowcombe First School. Good leadership and management, joint planning and shared expertise contribute successfully to pupils' learning. The school takes good care of pupils and gives them good support and guidance. It provides a satisfactory standard of education. This represents considerable improvement since the schools were federated.

Good teaching, supported by strong relationships, a good curriculum and effective assessment, underpins good learning. Pupils' achievement and standards, which suffered in the past because of a variety of staff changes, have been improved. Achievement is now satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Standards in speaking and listening and writing are below average and already feature as part of the school's development planning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school is successful in promoting pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy school, and know how to keep safe and stay healthy. They make a good contribution to the school as a community and are satisfactorily prepared for life in general. However, some pupils lack confidence in their own ability and find it difficult to express themselves. Pupils show caring attitudes which are fostered from the very start of Reception, where children make good progress in social development. Overall, standards are as expected in Reception and provision is satisfactory. Although they are limited by very small numbers, there are too few opportunities for children to make choices, learn through play, and show independence.

The school's self-evaluation is good. Staff have an accurate view of strengths and areas for development. Strong teamwork, shared vision and a clear commitment to provide for pupils' needs are very well supported by good management of finance, time and resources. The school's capacity to improve as part of the federation is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of speaking, listening and writing, developing pupils' use of vocabulary, sentence construction and handwriting, to give pupils more confidence in expressing themselves.
- Extend the opportunities to encourage children in Reception to learn through play and develop their independence.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This represents improvement following the federation of the two schools and the appointment of the two new class teachers last September. School records show that in the past, pupils underachieved, and there are still gaps in what pupils know, understand and can do, which will take some time to

overcome. Nevertheless, there is evidence of rapid, good progress, especially in Years 3 and 4, since September. Standards are now broadly average overall, with relative strengths in reading, resulting from new reading-together arrangements, and in numeracy, which is being used to support other subjects.

Standards are difficult to judge with so few pupils in each year group and vary widely. Considered over the last three years, they were below average largely because few pupils reached above-average levels. The school has identified writing and problem solving as areas most in need of improvement, particularly in Years 1 and 2. This inspection finds that standards are still below average in these aspects. Pupils' work shows that the use of vocabulary, sentence construction and handwriting are below expectations. This is due in part to underdeveloped speaking and listening skills, which also negatively affect pupils' confidence in solving problems in mathematics and science.

Children in Reception make satisfactory progress overall in the areas of learning for their age group. Progress in social development, where some children start school lacking experience, is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, securely based on good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils get on well together and their very caring attitudes reflect the school's Christian ideals and the family nature of the school. 'Everyone knows everyone' was a typical comment from pupils and parents.

Apart from some who dislike visiting the other federated school for physical education (a situation that the school is now monitoring), pupils enjoy school. Standards of behaviour are consistently good. Pupils are keen to explain that behaving well is part of the art of staying safe. They clearly feel that the school is a safe place.

Pupils of all ages understand that it is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are proud of the Healthy School and Eco-friendly Awards. The school council (which is nearly a third of those on roll!) makes a strong contribution to monitoring the life of the school. Councillors take their responsibilities very seriously and can confidently explain how they have had an impact on playground games and supporting those who may be upset.

Basic numeracy and information and communication technology skills are being steadily improved. This means that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for everyday life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching, established by the new teaching team from September 2006, is having a substantial impact on pupils' learning. Good, and much-improved, assessment is used effectively to provide for pupils of all abilities and a variety of ages in each class. Recently, this has particularly benefited higher-attaining pupils. Tracking records from good assessment show that such pupils are now more likely to reach above-average levels because expectations are higher.

There is a very good partnership between teachers and support staff. The quality of questioning, planning, relationships, and how time is managed are strengths in both classes. Staff are good at identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in order to help pupils catch up. This has been fundamental in pupils' significant, recent, rapid progress. That achievement and standards are currently no better than satisfactory is historical and not a reflection on current teaching.

Improving what is on offer for those in Reception and providing yet more opportunities for pupils to write at length, especially in Years 1 and 2, are aspects for further development in teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The staff in both schools in the federation have worked well together to ensure that there is a good, well-planned curriculum that meets pupils' needs and satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Time spent on each subject was heavily criticised in the last inspection, but this has been very effectively addressed. Much effort has gone into planning to provide opportunities to use and develop the skills of one subject area in another. For example, pupils develop their writing skills in history when describing Tudor life and make good use of their mathematical computation skills in topic work when planning holidays. The curriculum for Years 1 to 4 is broad, balanced, relevant and much improved. It is enhanced by a wide range of visits, visitors, clubs and activities, which are a credit to such a small school. This successfully makes learning enjoyable and underpins pupils' personal, as well as academic, development.

Good links with the church form a good basis for pupils' spiritual awareness and links with a school in The Gambia give pupils opportunities to develop an understanding of other cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a secure, safe environment. All required checks are carried out and good records are kept to ensure the health and safety of all concerned. This is

consistent with the very caring nature of the school and has been successfully maintained since it was a strong feature of the last report.

Guidance for pupils' academic development is good. Teachers mark work carefully and this helps pupils to make improvements. The recent move to involve pupils in setting personal targets in English and mathematics is raising standards. Developing this in other subjects is an area for further improvement.

There are good links with the local community. Parents are very supportive of the school. They are proud of the caring nature of Stogumber First. One commented to the inspector that 'the staff are very caring and dedicated and take into account the needs of all the children.' This was typical of remarks from other parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection, especially in the last year. With stability now established and the good quality of leadership and management, teaching, planning and care on offer, the school is set fair for the future. The leadership and management of the federation of the schools by the headteacher and governors are good, and have a good impact on pupils' learning. Although some initiatives are yet to have full effect, they are steadily improving pupils' achievement and raising standards.

Staff make a good team and all contribute effectively to the overall direction of the school through their management roles. There is a good corporate approach to school development planning, which means everyone is involved and expertise is shared across both schools. This has resulted in improvements, particularly to the curriculum, and how it is taught. Because self-evaluation is good, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and is well aware of relative weaknesses. Consequently, the findings of this inspection held no surprises for the school, with the issues raised about writing and the Foundation Stage already forming part of the plans for improvement.

Governors support the school enthusiastically. They have done well in managing the budget to ensure that there is a well-staffed, good quality learning environment. Their governance is good. However, governors do not yet have a clear enough understanding of pupils' achievement and standards. They have identified the need to further develop their monitoring to address this.

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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	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	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?	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?	2

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	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

What a treat it was for me to spend the day at your school. You are very polite and are well behaved. A particular thanks to the school council, who told me how proud they are of Stogumber First.

The school gives you what adults call 'a satisfactory standard of education'. It has got much better since the link-up with Crowcombe in 2005. The inspection has shown that you are working hard, standards are satisfactory and that the school is improving all the time.

Here are some of the highlights.

- You are being well cared for and helped to grow up as sensible people.
- The teachers and their assistants are good at planning interesting things for you to do and, because of their good teaching, this is helping you to learn well.
- Your school is well run. The headteacher, staff and governors know how to make improvements.

In order to be even better the school needs to help you improve your writing, and look at other ways which will help Reception children to learn by finding out even more for themselves.

I am sure you will all play your part by continuing to work hard. I wish you all the best for the future.