



Nether Stowey Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123789
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 292789
Inspection dates 4 July 2006 to 5 July 2006
Reporting inspector Patricia Davies AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mill Close
School category	Voluntary controlled		Nether Stowey
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 1NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01278 732508
Number on roll	193	Fax number	01278 733860
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Colin Humphrey
Date of previous inspection	8 July 2002	Headteacher	Mr Mark Braund

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Nether Stowey is a small primary school, but with steadily rising numbers. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds, but most are from families connected with the local rural economy. A very small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. Children enter the Reception class with below-average attainment, and particularly so in relation to language and literacy skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is about average, but proportions can be much higher in some year groups. There have been several changes to senior staff since the last inspection. There is an acting headteacher this term and a new headteacher joins the school in September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory and the school and inspectors agree on that judgement. The school's greatest strength lies in its good pastoral care. Its supportive culture is greatly valued by parents, and results in friendly, happy pupils who behave well. Pupils are keen to contribute to school life and enjoy the school's wide range of clubs and activities, particularly in music and sport. Attendance, however, is unsatisfactory, and the school does not do all it should to encourage good attendance.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is pupils' achievement. Children make a good start in the Reception class, where teaching is sometimes outstanding. As a result, they reach broadly average standards by the time they leave this class. Thereafter, progress is satisfactory, and standards are also broadly average by the end of Year 6. Improvements to the English curriculum have now secured satisfactory progress in writing, but this progress is not yet fast enough to fully make up for underachievement in the past.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvements to the curriculum, resources and assessment are having a positive influence on teaching and learning. There is now a firmly-established management structure, and members of staff are keen to tackle the tasks ahead of them. These factors indicate the school has the necessary capacity to bring about further improvement. Senior members of staff have looked closely at assessment data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, but not all teachers are analysing information on pupils' progress in sufficient detail in order to bring about more rapid improvements. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment data is analysed and used by all staff in order to identify areas of weaknesses and accelerate improvement, particularly in writing.
- Promote the need for good attendance more strongly among pupils and parents so that there are fewer absences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Having entered the Reception class with below-average attainment, pupils' overall achievement by the time they leave the school is satisfactory. As a result of good progress in the Reception year, standards are largely average when pupils join Year 1. Thereafter, progress is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities, including the more able. Consequently, broadly average standards are maintained at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Realistically challenging targets for pupils in Year 6 were largely met in the recent national tests.

Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in reading as the result of well-matched additional support. Particular attention has been given to raising

standards and achievement in writing, where pupils have not been doing as well as they should. Improvements to planning have had an increasing impact, so that progress in this subject is now satisfactory. Information about the national tests taken this term indicates some improvement in the proportion of pupils in Year 2 reaching the expected level in writing. In addition, more pupils in Year 6 reached the higher level 5 in English tests this year, even though the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in this group is much higher than usual. In some cases, pupils have made rapid progress in writing. However, this good rate of progress is not yet sufficiently consistent across the school for pupils to make up for lost ground in the past.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory as a whole and with good aspects. First and foremost, pupils are proud of their school and are keen to join in and play a part. In fact, they are disappointed that the school council does not meet more frequently so that they can contribute to school life more regularly. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well. They are polite, friendly and welcoming and readily supportive of each other. They say that they feel safe in school and know that someone will soon come along to play with them if they sit on the 'friendship bench' at playtime. During assemblies, pupils make thoughtful suggestions about moral issues, take moments to reflect quietly or contribute to class prayers. Pupils' ready enjoyment of African and Caribbean music exemplifies their good cultural awareness.

The hot, sunny weather showed pupils' good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They were quick to point to the importance of seeking out a shady spot and of drinking plenty of water. Pupils' satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills stand them in good stead for adult life, although there is greater scope for developing independent working skills through, for instance, investigating problems in mathematics. Attendance has fallen over the last three years, and is below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but vary in quality. Much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good. Even where teaching was satisfactory, it had some strong features. At its most effective, teaching extends and challenges pupils' ideas during discussion by asking for more detailed explanations. Sometimes, however, questions are not always directed at the quieter pupils to make sure that they also contribute. Whiteboard technology has brought a new touch of interest to lessons, but the most powerful tool is the use of drama. This strategy was highly effective during a literacy lesson in the Reception class. There was huge excitement as children pulled on their imaginary wetsuits and 'tumbled' into the water to explore the ocean.

Children eagerly discussed what they had 'seen,' and this high-quality discussion acted as a powerful stimulus for their subsequent writing activity. However, this imaginative approach is not replicated across the school. For example, completed work shows that written tasks are sometimes too mundane or do not expect enough from pupils.

Written feedback is encouraging and helpfully focuses on the learning intention of each task. In most cases, pupils are also involved in this assessment. However, the school is aware that it does not yet place enough emphasis on suggesting how pupils could improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improvements since the last inspection have ensured that the curriculum is now satisfactory and pupils have a wider experience across all subjects. The strongest feature of the curriculum is the stimulating provision for reception-aged children. Pupils also benefit from lessons with specialist teachers for music and physical education, and from a wide range of additional sporting activities. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is heightened when they take part in 'focus weeks,' which have a particular emphasis on subjects such as art. Opportunities to sing in the choir and to take part in plays and performances also valuably extend pupils' experiences.

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT), as well as in English, has benefited from better planning and additional resources. Pupils already have the chance to practise and extend their writing skills in other subjects, such as history, but the school is aware that these opportunities are not yet extensive enough.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's care, guidance and support are satisfactory. A strength lies in its good pastoral care. Parents greatly appreciate this aspect of the school. One parent wrote of its 'calm ethos,' while another described a safe and happy environment where their child felt 'comfortable and supported by peers and members of the teaching team.' The recent drive to recognise and reward achievement is having a big impact on pupils' confidence and well-being. There are good links with outside agencies. The progress and welfare of pupils looked after by the local authority are carefully monitored and, as a result, these pupils do well personally and academically. Child protection arrangements are firmly in place. However, the school does not do enough to promote the benefits of good attendance among pupils and parents.

Pupils with learning difficulties are carefully assessed and children's progress in the Reception class is diligently monitored. Pupils now have learning targets and there have been improvements to the range of information available to staff for tracking academic achievement. However, this data is not yet used extensively enough, or looked at in sufficient detail, in order to identify where pupils should be making greater progress, particularly in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strong leadership structures have been established at all levels. Although senior leadership has been significantly affected by staff changes and financial constraints, a new senior team is now in place. Much of this improvement is down to the time and care given by the governing body. The acting headteacher has quickly gained the respect of pupils and parents. New initiatives to promote pupils' personal development and raise the profile of ICT have been particularly successful. There is a ready enthusiasm among staff to get on with the job and it is clear that the improvements to the curriculum and assessment are providing an added impetus. These features demonstrate that the school has the capacity and determination to bring about further improvement.

The school has a largely clear view of its effectiveness and monitoring activities are expanding. Subject leaders, for example, are taking greater responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and learning. Governors, too, are increasing their visits in to school so that they have greater first-hand knowledge of the school's work. In addition, questionnaires have been a valuable source of information about the views of pupils and parents. Senior staff members have examined assessment information but, because this data is not yet analysed in enough depth nor used more widely among staff, areas of weakness are not always identified quickly enough so that the school can make the rapid progress it needs.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

You were very welcoming when we visited your school and we thoroughly enjoyed being with you all. You and your parents think your school is a friendly, happy place, and we agree. This letter is to tell you what else we found out about your school.

What your school does particularly well:

- Members of staff look after you well and make sure you are safe.
- Your behaviour is good and you are helpful to others.
- You enjoy the clubs and other activities the school arranges for you, especially music and sport.
- Those of you in the Reception class do well because lessons are often really exciting.
- Those of you who find learning difficult have made good progress in reading because of the extra help you have.
- Most of you are now making better progress in writing than you did in the past.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure teachers check the information about your progress more closely so that they spot where things need to be better, especially in your writing, and improve them as quickly as possible.
- Encourage you all to come to school regularly so that you can learn as much as possible.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead Inspector