



Kingston St Mary Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123795
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292793
Inspection date 7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Jacqueline Ikin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Greenway
School category	Voluntary controlled		Kingston St Mary
Age range of pupils	4-11		Taunton TA2 8JH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01823 451353
Number on roll (school)	101	Fax number	01823 451390
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	David Clews
		Headteacher	J Mccarthy
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This village school is much smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils on roll are from White British backgrounds. A small minority are from the traveller community. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is also below average.

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 a number of outstanding features. It is a stimulating and friendly place that provides a well-rounded education for its pupils and prepares them well for their future lives. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of its work, particularly for needy or vulnerable pupils. One commented, 'Both my children are happy and secure in the school and come home full of enthusiasm for what they are learning'.

Teaching and learning are good. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start and most pupils in the rest of the school, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well. However, the reading skills of some lower-ability pupils in Years 2 and 3 are not as good as they should be, which inhibits their achievement in other subjects. Standards are above average in English, science and mathematics. Outstanding music teaching results in very high quality singing and performance work. Teachers know their pupils well, plan very carefully for their different needs and mark work thoughtfully to help them improve. Assessment procedures are used conscientiously to check how well pupils are getting on. However, procedures for identifying the progress that pupils need to make each year in order to reach the challenging targets they need to reach by Year 6 are not systematic enough. This contributes to some variations in standards and achievement from year to year.

The curriculum, including provision for Reception-aged children, is good. Visits to places of interest together with a wide range of after-school activities contribute very well to pupils' progress and enjoyment of school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The good care and guidance and the genuine interest that the school takes in individual pupils and the outstanding pastoral support that they receive are significant factors in pupils' growth in confidence and eagerness to learn. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Very good links with the church contribute to this. Behaviour is good and in the classroom it is often excellent. Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life through their work on the school council and also contribute well to the local community.

The leadership and management of the school are good and there have been good improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher provides very good leadership and there is a strong sense of teamwork in the school. Staff and governors are highly committed to the school and are fully involved in evaluating its work and its growth and development. The school's capacity for future improvement is good because of this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by improving the achievement of lower-ability pupils in reading.

- Ensure that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school by identifying where pupils need to be by the end of each year group in order to meet the challenging targets set for them by the end of Year 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There is a very wide range of attainment on entry to the Reception class which varies considerably from year to year. However, overall it is average. The children make good progress and by the end of their Reception year most are working securely within the goals expected for children of a similar age. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement for most pupils, including those with learning difficulties. The school has successfully improved standards in writing through a clear focus on improving spelling and grammar. However, the school recognises that some lower-ability pupils in Years 2 and 3 do not always do as well as they should in reading and this limits their achievement in other subjects. Standards and achievement fluctuate from year to year, in part because of the varying nature and the small size of some cohorts. However, the informal way in which annual targets are set for pupils in each year group also contributes to these variations. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do as well as their classmates. Those from traveller backgrounds achieve well when they are in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school provides a very safe and supportive atmosphere where pupils grow in confidence and are eager to learn. Pupils are very proud of their school. Their exuberance and love of learning are exemplified in their joyous singing, enthusiastic responses in lessons and above-average attendance rates. Behaviour is good and sometimes excellent in lessons because of the trusting relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils have very responsible attitudes towards others, for example, in the playground where older 'buddies' take care of younger pupils, comforting them if they are unhappy. The school offers outstanding opportunities for pupils to help shape its work, for example, when consulting them prior to the formulation of the school improvement plan. Pupils contribute extremely well to this through their work on the school council. They speak up when they see something they feel is not right and are very happy to initiate and organise events, such as a 'Fruit Cocktail Bar', to raise money for charity. They have an excellent understanding of their own cultural traditions and are well prepared for the cultural diversity of modern British society. Pupils' excellent personal growth and good achievement in literacy and numeracy prepare them well for their future education and working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In Years 5 and 6 and in music, where the teacher has a high level of subject expertise, teaching is often outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and lessons are thoroughly planned and prepared to meet their different needs. For example, in Years 3 and 4, there is planning for seven different mathematics groups. In Years 5 and 6, activities skilfully build on what has gone before, such as when pupils were encouraged to count in different ways in a numeracy lesson, leading to a discovery of how to count in units of ninety, calculate degrees in a quarter turn and the accurate use of a protractor. Improvements to the teaching of spelling and grammar are contributing to improvements in writing. The school has a range of strategies to teach reading which are successful for most pupils. It is aware that more needs to be done to help some lower ability pupils improve their comprehension skills. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties enables them to participate fully and make good progress in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Well-planned learning opportunities promote children's curiosity and independence in all the areas of learning in the Reception class. Careful planning ensures that the curriculum is fully covered in the rest of the school. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good. Their needs are identified at an early stage and teaching assistants, who are well briefed, give them good support. There are good arrangements for gifted and talented pupils and the school has recognised the need to boost the achievement of lower-ability pupils in Years 2 and 3. The curriculum is enriched well by carefully planned links between subjects. In addition there is good use of information and communications technology and very good use of the school's grounds and visits to places of interest, such as the visits to the Hindu temple and the synagogue which took place during the inspection. Excellent provision for pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship makes a significant contribution to their personal growth. There is a very good range of after-school activities which are very well attended and make significant contributions to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The commitment of staff to pupils' welfare is uncompromising and the pastoral care and support given to pupils are outstanding. The staff know the pupils very well and provide well-judged advice and support for their personal development. As a result, pupils feel very safe and know who to go to if they need help. The school works very effectively with parents and has their trust and confidence, particularly when pupils have difficulties. This includes very good liaison with external agencies when required.

Arrangements for health and safety and for safeguarding pupils are robust. The support for pupils' academic development is generally good. The school's effective assessment and tracking arrangements ensure that most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, receive the day-to-day guidance they need to help them make good progress. Long-term targets for the end of Year 6 are based on earlier test results. However, procedures for identifying how much progress pupils need to make each year in order to meet them are too informal.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school ensure that most pupils achieve well. The headteacher's very clear vision for the future of the school has built a strong staff team who are highly committed to moving the school forward. She is quick to provide training and advice where it is needed and to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils. Self-evaluation procedures are good. The views of pupils, parents, governors and staff are sought and there is rigorous analysis of assessment data. As a result the school has an accurate view of its strengths and where it needs to concentrate its efforts in order to raise standards. The school's plan for improvement is thorough and identifies the right areas for attention. This has resulted in improvements, for example, in pupils' writing skills. However, the school knows that more needs to be done for some pupils in reading. Governors are very committed to the school and its community. They give generously of their time and expertise for the benefit of the school, for example, during the work to improve the school building and in the setting up of a school website.

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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?	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	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	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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

Thank you for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and play. We can see why you like your school and think that it gives you a good education.

What we liked about your school

- Your teachers know you all very well indeed, plan your lessons carefully and find interesting ways to help you to enjoy learning.
- You work hard and most of you are making good progress and reach good standards in English, mathematics and science. We were also very impressed by the very good quality of your singing.
- You behave well and do a lot to look after the school and help make the school a happy place.
- The school provides a lot of interesting things for you to take part in after school and good opportunities for sport and music.
- Your school is very well run by the headteacher and all the staff support her well in this.

What we think needs to be improved

- The progress that some of you make in reading.
- The way that the school plans the targets for you to meet each year.

You can help in all this by continuing to make the school an even better place through your work on the school council, getting to know what your targets are and working hard to reach them.