

North Curry CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 123797 |
| Local Authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 292794 |
| Inspection dates | 12–13 July 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | George Logan |

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 category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 157 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Barbara Drakeford |
| Headteacher | Elspeth Hedges |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 June 2002 |
| School address | Greenway North Curry Taunton TA3 6NQ |
| Telephone number | 01823 490423 |
| Fax number | 01823 491080 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school, which serves the village of North Curry and the surrounding area, is slightly smaller than many other primary schools. Most pupils come from white British backgrounds. No pupils learn English as an additional language. However, around 14% of pupils are from Gypsy/Roma families, with a small number of Travellers of Irish heritage. This group has grown significantly in the last three years. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

'Everyone's really friendly – the atmosphere's great: the teachers encourage it!' This comment from a pupil reflects the positive feelings which many pupils have for their school. They appreciate its strengths as a community, as do many parents who are happy with their children's education.

While it has strengths, the overall effectiveness of the school is currently satisfactory. This is because standards and pupils' achievement are only now showing signs of recovery after a decline precipitated by an extended period of turbulence, involving significant turnover of pupils and staff. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and more able pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, need to be more consistently challenged if this is to improve. This year, pupils have made better progress in Year 6, where standards are broadly average but have improved significantly in English. However, across the school, progress is satisfactory. More pupils have attained the higher levels in Year 6 in 2007 than in 2006 and have achieved their targets in English. However, performance in mathematics lags some way behind English and science and remains a priority for improvement. The school has good relationships with outside agencies. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully monitored and achieve satisfactorily. Gypsy/Roma pupils, many of whom have been in the school for at least a year, have established patterns of frequent attendance. With well targeted support from the school and local authority, this is enabling several to make particularly rapid progress, albeit often from a low starting point.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has provided the resolute leadership necessary to restore the school to stability. However, more robust action is needed to improve achievement. While higher standards in English in 2007 are the result of specific intervention, the school recognises that similar action is needed in relation to literacy in Years 1 and 2 and mathematics across the school, so that underachievement is eliminated. Effective tracking systems exist to monitor progress in reading and writing, but are less well developed in mathematics.

Self-evaluation is accurate. School leaders know that satisfactory teaching and learning must improve if achievement is to be consistently good. At present, work is not always planned well to match pupils' abilities and the level of challenge is variable. Reception class children progress well because the provision is well led, teaching is good and the curriculum is well planned.

The curriculum is satisfactory, although extra-curricular and enrichment elements are good. While care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, pastoral aspects are good. Academic guidance is not better than satisfactory because the use of individual targets is inconsistent across the school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, although behaviour is good and other aspects, such as attendance, have shown significant improvement recently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and raise standards in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics across the school.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching, ensuring that pupils are challenged by work which is closely matched to their needs.

- Ensure that the marking of pupils' work is more thorough and more consistently referenced to pupils' personal targets for improvement.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment on entry to Reception is around the expected level. Children make good progress in Reception so that, on entry to Year 1, standards exceed those expected. This brisk start is not sustained in Years 1 and 2. Inconsistencies in teaching and planning have led to variable, though broadly average, standards by the end of Year 2. Too few pupils attain the higher levels, especially in mathematics. Until 2004, standards at Year 6 were above average. There was a marked decline in 2005 and 2006. Although still broadly average, standards have begun to rise again in 2007. There has been significant improvement in English, in the proportion attaining Level 5 in English and science, and in the performance of boys, reflecting effective action by school leaders. While standards in mathematics are still too low, more challenging teaching has ensured that the achievement of the older pupils has improved. While challenging targets for Year 6 in 2007 have been achieved in English, there is some shortfall in mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, because their needs are identified promptly and they receive effective support. Many Gypsy/Roma pupils make good progress, from a low starting point, because they are settled, attend consistently and are well monitored and supported.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well. They like school and enjoy taking responsibility, such as supporting Reception children with their reading. Satisfactory awareness of the wider world is promoted through charitable activities and involvement in community events. Attendance has improved significantly and is now average, reflecting a robust response to non-attendance. Most Gypsy/Roma pupils have attendance levels significantly higher than are commonly found. The school council is an increasingly effective conduit for pupils' views on areas such as homework. Pupils feel safe, care for each other and say there is no bullying. Exclusions are rare. A recent successful Business Enterprise project in Year 5 has developed pupils' awareness of community and workforce skills. Nevertheless, sound basic skills mean that pupils' readiness for the next stage is satisfactory. Pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. While moral and social elements are strong, pupils' awareness of multicultural Britain could be developed further.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Improved tracking and target-setting structures in literacy are focusing teachers more on pupils' progress. In the Foundation Stage, staff have a clear view of what children need to achieve. As a result, teaching is consistently good and children make good progress.

Relationships are good, behaviour is managed effectively and teachers have good subject knowledge. However, the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is greater in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. This is because planning in Years 1 and 2 does not provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils. Little use is made of individual targets and marking does not consistently indicate the necessary next steps. Planning in Years 3 to 6 is more focused on the needs of individuals and there is more challenge. This is contributing to better performance in Year 6. However, tracking of progress and effective target-setting remain more robust in literacy than numeracy. Marking does not consistently provide pupils with the guidance they need.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from Gypsy/Roma families are well supported by effective teaching assistants and make at least satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although significant time is given to the development of important basic skills, this is not always used effectively. When tasks are not sharply matched to pupils' needs, progress becomes too slow. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, with some good activities to support the areas of learning. Personal and social education is covered well across the school. Planning in Years 3 to 6 takes the mixed-age classes into account. A more thematic approach, embracing subjects, such as science, history and geography, increases their relevance to pupils. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to practise writing in science, with an over-reliance on worksheets. While the school does not have a register, pupils identified as gifted or talented have access to some activities within the local cluster group. In other respects, more able pupils are not always well supported. The curriculum for Gypsy/Roma pupils is closely focused on embedding key basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Themed days extend and reinforce learning. A good range of planned visits gives learning relevance. The range of well supported extra-curricular activities is good. These, and the residential opportunities, contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Adults promote pupils' health and safety well. Assemblies encourage a good sense of community awareness. Supervision is effective and pupils feel confident that there is always an adult to support them. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. The school has good links with external agencies, so ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from Gypsy/Roma families are effectively supported. Pupils' progress is tracked satisfactorily, but this is more effective in literacy than in mathematics and standards reflect this. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Older pupils have targets for improvement and generally know what they are. However, there is inconsistency in the implementation and monitoring of targets, particularly in mathematics. Pupils do not receive

consistently clear information through marking on how to improve. Consequently, targets have less impact on pupils' progress than they might have.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has given firm leadership through an extended period of instability. The number of pupils has grown. The significant increase in Gypsy/Roma pupils has been successfully managed. With the effective support of the Traveller Education Service, the school has gained the trust of these families and relatively consistent attendance is having a direct impact on the achievement of their children. However, although literacy standards in Year 6 have improved in 2007, as a result of a recent initiative, there has not been sufficient urgency in dealing with inconsistent achievement in other key areas. Although effective in reading and writing, tracking systems in mathematics are underdeveloped. However, leaders recognise what improvements are needed. With a full management team recently re-established, the school is satisfactorily placed to move forward.

Day-to-day management is efficient. Performance management systems are effective. The governors' role has developed satisfactorily and they are increasingly ready to hold the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | 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? | 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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

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

16 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Curry CofE Primary School, Taunton, TA3 6NQ

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. Many of you were very interested in what we were doing and were very keen to talk to us. We appreciated all the discussions we had with you and were impressed by your politeness and your enthusiasm for school. We found that North Curry CofE Primary is a satisfactory school.

These are the things we most liked about your school:

- You are well behaved, work hard, enjoy school and you attend more frequently than in the past. Your teachers look after you well and give you satisfactory guidance about how you can improve your work.
- The teaching is satisfactory, sometimes better. Most of you make steady progress in lessons and are doing as well as most other children of your age.
- The curriculum is quite well organised and you support the after-school clubs and activities well.
- The headteacher and the senior teachers know what the school needs to do next to get even better and they all manage the school satisfactorily.

We have asked the staff to make some changes so that the school becomes more effective:

- Make sure that the teaching is really challenging so that the pace of learning is good across the school.
- Help you to raise the standard of your work in Years 1 and 2, and in mathematics across the school.
- Support you even more by marking written work carefully so that you know exactly how well you have done and what you need to do next. This information can then be linked to your targets.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We wish you all success in the future.

Yours faithfully

George Logan Lead inspector