



West Monkton Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123804
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292795
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Lorna Brackstone

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Monkton Heathfield
Age range of pupils	4–11		Taunton TA2 8PA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01823 412582
Number on roll (school)	231	Fax number	01823 412582
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Geoff Bucher
		Headteacher	Jane Bevans
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006	Inspection number 292795
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school with eight classes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. There has been virtually a complete change of staff since the last inspection, which has caused disruption to school life. The school is now experiencing a more settled period. The current headteacher took up post in April 2005 and was joined by a new deputy head in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

West Monkton provides a satisfactory education. The headteacher has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of the school. This is illustrated well by swift intervention in Years 3 to 6, which has halted the downward trend of results in national tests. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's clear direction and positive thinking are being well supported by staff and governors, who are all eager to build on the recent improvements. They have a sound capacity to further improve the school.

Standards are average overall and pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve satisfactorily from their starting points. However, pupils do not make sufficient progress in writing because they are not given enough opportunities to write independently and to use their skills for a range of different purposes. Whilst the teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, senior staff know that teachers' expectations are not high enough, and this is limiting pupils' achievement. The curriculum is satisfactory and is soundly based on national guidelines. The quality and provision for the Reception Year are satisfactory, with planning linked to the recommended areas of learning for this age group. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is sound. Behaviour is satisfactory in and around school and pupils are confident that any anti-social incidents are dealt with appropriately. Good attendance levels show that most pupils like coming to school. Pupils are complimentary about changes in recent years and feel that this is due to their headteacher. Their views are summarised by one who explained that 'the school has improved. She has made changes and is a friend as well as a headteacher. She cares about us a lot'. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has made substantial improvements to pastoral care arrangements and pupils feel safe. However, the academic support and guidance given to pupils is not consistent throughout the school. Marking is inconsistent and teachers do not provide sufficient information on how pupils can improve their work.

The school has developed good links with the secondary school next door, with the arts centre and with various other local groups to extend learning opportunities for pupils. The school works well with parents, the majority of whom express a great deal of confidence in the headteacher. Their positive views are reflected in comments such as, 'the school is a happier place for the children to be and she is well respected. Her door is always open to discuss any problems. I am more than happy with the education my children are receiving at West Monkton'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing standards throughout the school by providing more opportunities for pupils to write independently and for a range of purposes.
- Improve teachers' expectations so that lessons move at a faster pace and provide more challenge for the pupils.
- Develop whole-school procedures for marking pupils' work and ensure that targets are set to help them reach the next stage in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with standards that are typical for their age group. They achieve satisfactorily in Reception and most attain the expected standards by the time they start in Year 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress in reading, attaining above average standards. They make satisfactory progress in mathematics and achieve average standards. Pupils are not making sufficient progress in writing and standards are below average at the end of Year 2.

Since 2005 there has been an improving trend in pupils' performance in tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6, which was below average in the previous two years. The most recent tests show that standards at the end of Year 6 were above average and, in relation to their starting points at the start of Year 3, pupil achievement was good. This was because the incoming headteacher reorganised teaching groups and provided extra support for pupils. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have experienced staff turbulence but are now making sound progress. They are working at average standards overall, and this represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils leave school literate and numerate and satisfactorily prepared for their future education. However, their writing skills are not as strong as their reading skills. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils like coming to school and particularly enjoy meeting and playing with their friends. They know what acceptable behaviour is and respond in a satisfactory way to staff expectations. Pupils appreciate their 'Friday' treat when they can bring chocolate or crisps for a snack. They explain how they would like to have a hot school meal rather than always having a packed lunch and this illustrates their clear understanding of the need to eat sensibly. Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise and know that involvement in competitive sports helps them 'learn to win and know how to lose', thus preparing them well as citizens. Pupils make a sound contribution to the community. The school council has made sensible decisions about playground improvements and Year 6 pupils respond well to carrying out duties around school and various fund-raising activities. Pupils have a developing understanding of other cultures through links with a school in Ghana, and through visits to temples and synagogues. However, they are not well enough prepared for the world of work because there are no links with local businesses and opportunities for them to plan and carry out work independently are limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Positive relationships result in pupils knowing that they can ask for help if they get stuck. Pupils benefit from the support given by teaching assistants, who work particularly well with those who have learning difficulties. Teachers know what they want pupils to learn but do not always make this clear to them. The pace in lessons is not always fast enough and the activities are not always closely matched to pupils' differing needs. Although questions are often used effectively to assess learning and extend pupils' understanding, they are not always used to challenge pupils' thinking. Marking is used to make positive comments but is not used effectively to guide pupils about the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Reception Year curriculum is satisfactory, although deficiencies in the outside play facilities restrict children's physical and creative activities. The recent emphasis on ensuring skills are taught progressively through the school in English, mathematics and science has helped to raise standards at the end of Year 6. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write independently across the curriculum in a variety of contexts, and this limits their achievement. The curriculum is currently under review to ensure that all lessons are stimulating and enjoyable. Music and the performing arts have a high profile in the school, which effectively extends pupils' experiences. For example, pupils are involved in an annual musical production at the local arts centre. Both pupils and parents appreciate the reasonable range of extra-curricular opportunities available after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. All statutory procedures are in place, including child protection and risk assessment. The headteacher has implemented rigorous systems to improve all aspects of health and safety to ensure pupils feel safe. Pupils with learning difficulties receive appropriate support from teachers and teaching assistants to support their learning. Links with specialist agencies are satisfactory. There are sound links with outside agencies and the school seeks additional advice on supporting pupils' needs where appropriate. The tracking of pupils' academic progress is in the early stages of development and has not yet had an impact on standards. Although pupils have been set individual targets for literacy, this does not yet extend to mathematics and more needs to be done if achievement is to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

On taking up post, the headteacher quickly identified key weaknesses in provision and introduced new initiatives to improve standards, which had declined after the last inspection. The recent appointment of an experienced deputy headteacher has ensured that there is a strong leadership team, fully committed to providing the best quality education and demonstrating a focused approach to improvement. Work is going on to strengthen subject leadership and teachers have a growing understanding of their role in improving pupil achievement. Governors are supportive of the school and, because they are given good information, have an increased understanding of the school's performance. Staff and governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher has developed detailed monitoring systems which enable staff to see how each pupil in their class is progressing and whether they are doing well enough. However, these systems are at an early stage of implementation and are not yet making an impact on target setting and bringing about overall improvements in achievement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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.

Leadership and management

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

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. We really enjoyed meeting you all and we were grateful for the way in which you helped us do our job. A special thanks to the pupils we met who spoke so honestly and clearly about life at West Monkton.

We think your school provides you with a sound education and it is getting better every day. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you. Your progress is sound and the average standards you reach by Year 6 help to prepare you for the next stage of your education. You enjoy school, particularly working with your friends and taking part in performances and playing sport. Teaching is satisfactory but you could be encouraged to work harder. The programme for learning is sound but we know that you would like it to be more interesting. The adults in charge of the school are working to do this. Your headteacher is determined to speed up the progress you make and has devised good systems which will help your teachers achieve this and give you the very best education.

This is what we have suggested to help the school become even better:

- Help you to improve your writing skills by developing links between subjects and giving you more opportunities to write on your own.
- Ensure that all lessons keep you interested so that you do your best.
- Help you to get better at your work by giving you clearer guidance on how you can improve and setting targets that challenge you.

As you can see, you have your part to play. I wish you lots of luck for the future.