



Shipham Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123812
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292798
Inspection date 6 February 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	Turnpike Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Shipham
Age range of pupils	4-8		Winscombe BS25 1TX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01934 843485
Number on roll (school)	66	Fax number	01934 842862
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Alisdair Hotston-Moore
		Headteacher	Antonia Gwynn
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. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is also below average. Most children's attainment is broadly at the level expected for their age when they enter the Reception class.

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 which is very well led by the headteacher. Pupils achieve well and are well prepared for their future lives because of the good attention given to their personal and academic growth. The comments of many parents, that 'the school values the individual', are reflected in the good attention that is given to monitoring pupils' progress and planning for their widely different needs. Standards are above average overall. They are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Excellent teaching in the Foundation Stage gives children a flying start to their schooling. Teaching and learning in the rest of the school are good. This is the main reason why pupils, including those who are gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties, do well. Even so, the progress of some lower ability pupils in mathematics slows down as they get older because there is not enough emphasis on developing their mental calculation skills and mathematical vocabulary.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Behaviour is good, and it is often excellent during lessons. Pupils grow in confidence and are eager to learn as a result of the very good relationships that they have with all the adults who work with them. The school's welcoming atmosphere, together with the good care, guidance and support that are provided are also significant factors in pupils' development as well-rounded individuals. The school is very much part of the local community. Its very strong links with the church enables pupils to make a good contribution to community life. Their involvement in charitable events is a good example of this.

The curriculum is good. Effective planning ensures that all the subjects are covered thoroughly. Daily lessons are enriched well through additional activities such as French and instrumental tuition. Occasional weeks when the whole school is united in a particular focus, such as 'arts week', promote links between subjects well. These weeks also give very good opportunities for pupils to acquire the cross-curricular skills they need in order to become effective learners, such as in problem-solving and working independently. However, there is insufficient planning for the routine development of these learning skills in the normal curriculum.

The leadership and management of the school are good and there have been good improvements since the last inspection. There is strong teamwork, not only amongst staff but also involving governors, who are very strongly committed to the school. All are united in their determination to provide the best possible education that they can for the pupils. The school's capacity for future improvement is good because of this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of lower ability pupils in mathematics by improving their mathematical vocabulary and developing their skills in mental calculations.
- Improve planning to ensure that the curriculum supports pupils in consistently developing skills such as in problem solving and working independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children's attainment is at the level expected for their age when they enter the Reception class. They make excellent progress during the year and many exceed the early learning goals for children of their age by the beginning of Year 1. Pupils make good progress during Years 1 to 4. Standards in most recent years have been significantly above average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Improvements in the use of target setting, the introduction of cursive writing and effective teaching methods contribute to pupils' strong performance in writing. Standards in mathematics are above average and not quite as high as those in reading and writing. Although most pupils are doing well in mathematics, the progress of some lower-attaining pupils slows down as they get older. There are some weaknesses in their mental mathematics skills and their mathematical vocabulary. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well in relation to their starting points for learning, as do more able and gifted and talented pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils get an excellent start in their personal and social development in the Reception class. They quickly learn how to get on with their classmates and make choices and decisions in the course of their learning. Pupils feel secure and grow in confidence from an early stage because all teachers build very good relationships with their pupils. Pupils greatly enjoy school and have responded enthusiastically to recent initiatives in English. One pupil said, for example, that he now likes writing because it is 'relaxing'.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy as a result of participating in the 'healthy schools' award. The school's strong links with the church and local community contribute well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good knowledge of different cultures and traditions but their understanding of modern multi-ethnic society is relatively less well developed. Pupils make a good contribution to the local and the school community. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and older pupils befriend younger ones, in particular looking after them well if they are lonely or unhappy. Behaviour is good, and sometimes excellent in lessons. Pupils report that, although no bullying occurs, occasional thoughtless behaviour is quickly sorted out. The school's attendance rates are above average and there is hardly any unauthorised absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is outstanding in the Reception class. The teacher skilfully identifies what children already know and then uses this as a starting point for learning in a wide

variety of well-planned practical activities. Teaching in the rest of the school is consistently good. All teachers have high expectations of their pupils and plan lessons carefully to match learning to the different ages and capabilities in their classes. However, not enough attention is given to helping lower ability pupils to develop the language and the skills that they need for mental calculations.

There is accurate teaching of literacy. Skilful teaching of cursive writing from Year 2, and teachers' increased emphasis on breaking down words to help with spelling support the development of pupils' basic skill in writing. Writing lessons are made exciting, for example through opportunities for pupils to tell stories before writing them down. Teachers also make connections between different subjects in lessons during focused weeks to make learning meaningful. For example, during an arts focused week, in a Year 3 and 4 mathematics lesson pupils scaled up a copy of Henri Matisse's painting 'The Snail'. Good use of specialist teachers and instructors, for example in physical education and music, make a significant contribution to the standards achieved in these subjects. Teaching assistants support pupils' progress well, in particular assisting the progress of those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Very 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 and for more able pupils is good. Good links with other schools enhance the curriculum. For example, the school's satisfactory provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is augmented by regular opportunities for pupils to use the computer suite at a neighbouring school. Provision for personal, social, health education and citizenship is good. There is very good use of focused weeks in which the whole school link subjects together under a common theme. The arts week is a good example. Pupils were intrigued by Marc Chagall's painting 'I and the Village' and asked many questions about it. They used the skills of communication, creativity, problem solving, ICT and independent learning in the activities that followed. However, the development of these skills is not consistent because they are not specifically incorporated into normal subject planning. The satisfactory range of after-school activities is very well attended and contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are areas of significant strength. As a result, pupils feel safe and able to approach their teachers if they have a problem. Child protection procedures are good and have improved since the last inspection. Routines and practices to ensure pupils' health and safety are consistently applied by all staff. For example, all teachers are mindful of procedures to avoid accidents in the confined hall space during physical education lessons. Links with parents are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties or other disabilities also

receive good levels of care. Non-teaching staff and some parents play a significant part in providing a safe and caring environment, for instance during lunch in the hall and at playtimes. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are good. An extensive range of information about individual pupils' attainment is gathered and generally used well to provide challenging activities for all pupils in lessons. However, there are some inconsistencies in the way that work is marked. There is good use of comments to help pupils know what they have done well and how they can improve their work further in some books, but not in others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school have improved since the last inspection and ensure that pupils achieve well. The school's success owes much to the very good leadership of the headteacher. Her thoughtful and reflective approach, together with her clear vision for the future of the school, has built a strong staff team which is 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. The school's plan for improvement is thorough and identifies the right areas for attention. Over time, this has resulted in significant improvements, for example in pupils' writing skills.

Self-evaluation procedures are good, and the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Staff evaluate their own and each other's teaching in lessons as part of the school's continual drive for improvement. Subject leadership and the work of the coordinator for special educational needs are good. Subject leaders use rigorous procedures to evaluate pupils' progress and their findings are used effectively to raise standards. They have not yet combined their efforts to develop the use of the cross-curricular learning skills. The governors' commitment to the school and their knowledge of how it works are impressive.

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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	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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 with 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

- You get an excellent start to school in the Reception class.
- Your teachers know you all well, plan your lessons carefully and find interesting ways to help you to enjoy learning, such as in writing and in 'art weeks'.
- You work hard and are making good progress. You reach particularly good standards in English and science.
- You behave well and do a lot to look after the school and help make the school a happy place.
- Your headteacher is doing a very good job in making the school a good place for you to learn. All the teachers and governors support her well in this.

What we think needs to be improved

- The way that some of you are taught how to think through and talk about mathematical problems.
- The way that the school helps you to develop the skills such as problem solving and independence that you need to be really good at learning.

You can help make the school an even better place through your work on the school council and by continuing to work hard.