



# Combe St Nicholas Church of England VA Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 123828  
**Local Authority** Somerset  
**Inspection number** 292805  
**Inspection date** 5 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Janet Simms

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Combe St Nicholas
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Chard
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		TA20 3NG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01460 63116
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	98	<b>Fax number</b>	01460 66963
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	L Cole
		<b>Headteacher</b>	S May
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. No pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with none using English as an additional language. There is an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The number of families claiming free school meals is low. There have been significant changes to staffing, and teaching has been disrupted because of absences. When children start school they have broadly expected skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a sound education, despite a high level of staff changes. Pupils feel happy and safe and they enjoy their education. The school's strong, caring characteristics result in good personal development. Pupils acquire a strong sense of personal and local responsibility. This is appreciated by parents and carers, who comment positively on the school's "good, close links with the community." Pupils possess good social skills on entry and leave the school as confident, well-rounded, "kind, considerate and articulate young people" in the words of a parent.

Children's standards on entry are broadly as expected nationally and a little above that level in language use. Children progress satisfactorily through Reception and Years 1 and 2 and reach slightly above-average standards at Year 2. Older pupils make steady progress to Year 6. Standards overall are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Younger pupils' rate of progress has improved over the past year because of better teaching and curriculum reorganisation. Pupils are now making consistent progress in all years. Teaching is satisfactory and improving, enabling all pupils to learn and progress as they should. Marking and assessment do not give pupils enough information about how to improve, so pupils are sometimes unsure about how to progress. The school recognises that academic guidance is not strong enough and has prioritised this as an area for development. Curriculum planning has improved greatly since the last inspection. However, more-able pupils are not always challenged enough in their regular lessons because the work they are given is occasionally too easy and does not take account of what they already know. By contrast, a few capable pupils, who work with groups of pupils who are older than they are, do well. The small group of pupils who work at levels below their year group receive useful reinforcement of learning. Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully maintained a sense of continuity and stability and has managed the disruptions to teaching well. The staff team works well together, providing a good quality of care. School self-evaluation has resulted in some improvements, although there is more to do to make sure that teaching meets the needs of the more able pupils. Governors fulfil their duties properly, with many regularly and actively involved with work in the school. These and other local volunteers provide a valuable, well-used resource which helps pupils' achievement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve marking so that individual pupils know clearly what they must learn and do next to improve their work.
- The challenge for more able children should be improved and highlighted in teachers planning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school and continues to improve. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 has improved since the last inspection, and ensures that younger pupils now do as well as older ones. Standards are slightly above average at the end of Years 2 and Year 6. Although children's entry standards vary year on year, they are broadly as expected nationally, with good levels of social development and language skills. Pupils make steady progress in Reception and Years 1 and 2 to reach slightly above-average standards, with particularly good progress in reading. This represents an improvement on the previous three years, when standards were below average and the more capable pupils did not achieve as well as they should. Good support, including that from teaching assistants, enables pupils with learning difficulties to achieve as well as others.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are also on an upward trend, with the most recent results being above average. Progress was particularly good in mathematics. Individual pupils who take national tests a year early do well, but these are few. Work in regular lessons is not always planned sufficiently carefully to stretch abler pupils enough. Despite this, investment in additional support last year helped a higher proportion of more-capable pupils attain above-average standards.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. They are happy to come to school and they comment on their "friendly" teachers and other staff. This enthusiasm and enjoyment have led to improved attendance, which is now above average, reversing a recent decline.

Pupils behave well in class and are polite and courteous to visitors. They are prepared to think and reflect about abstract ideas, and respond well to improved opportunities to learn about cultural diversity. Pupils were very interested in studying Caribbean life, for instance. Many involvements with local cultural activities develop good learning about community responsibility. Pupils influence decisions about school life through the school council and older ones willingly take on responsibilities as monitors. The school is planning for older pupils to become involved in self-assessment, and most are fully capable of this.

Pupils know how to stay safe and they develop a proper understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Parents agree strongly that pupils leave the school with good understanding of moral codes, good social skills and high levels of self-confidence. Secure literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills prepare them properly for their future education and working life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved recently. Although absences and staff turnover have disrupted teaching, learning has remained satisfactory. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 in particular has improved significantly since the last inspection, leading to the improved standards and achievement for Year 2 in 2006. Disruptions have also affected older pupils, but they continued to learn satisfactorily and achieve their potential.

An important reason for pupils' enjoyment in learning is that relationships with staff are good. Work is suitably matched to needs in most cases, but activities do not always challenge more-able pupils enough, so a few say that some work is "too easy." The school recognises that assessment and marking need strengthening. Assessment information is not used enough to plan suitably challenging work for some of the higher-attaining pupils, and marking does not always help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

#### Curriculum and other activities Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and there has been considerable improvement since the last report. It now conforms to national requirements and is planned so that pupils progress through their studies at an even pace. Planning is usefully flexible and enables individual targeted pupils to study above or below their chronological age groups. In ordinary lessons, planning for the most able pupils does not show consistently good levels of challenge, and this slows their progress.

The school provides a good range of enrichment activities such as music, drama and sport clubs and residential trips for older pupils. There is good participation in local community events. These and other links provide well for pupils' good personal development, which is at the heart of curriculum planning. Links with partner schools are strong, with useful joint staff training about curriculum developments.

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## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The school's care and support for pupils are good. Parents greatly appreciate the fact that pupils settle quickly into classes and feel safe. Most agree with the parent who values the "caring and nurturing attitude towards children's development." This promotes good personal confidence and enjoyment, so all pupils feel positive about expressing ideas.

Academic guidance is weak. Although tracking of individuals' progress has started, it does not yet provide a mechanism for raising achievement. Information from assessment is not used consistently well enough to ensure that all pupils make good day-to-day progress by setting specific, individual targets for improvement.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has remained the point of stability amongst a recently changed staff. Increasing pupil numbers have created unhelpful pressure on space, which the school manages successfully. School objectives are firmly rooted in successful promotion of pupils' personal development.

Progress by the time pupils leave the school has remained satisfactory and the dip in achievement at Year 2 is now resolved. Critical weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching have been tackled since the last report. Parents are now very satisfied with school provision. Aspects of school self-evaluation are satisfactory, for instance, judgements about improved teaching and learning. Others are weaker, particularly those relating to how assessments can be used to improve pupils' achievement and standards. The use of data does not provide a sharp analysis upon which to plan for the consistently good achievement of all groups. A need for training in these aspects is recognised. Governors provide a proper level of challenge for the headteacher and are well involved with school activities. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 welcoming us into your school on Thursday 5th October. I am writing to tell you what we learned about your school.

- You enjoy coming to school and feel happy and safe there. Adults take good care of you. You behave well and your parents are very pleased with the way you develop self-confidence. We agree with them.
- Your progress has been improving lately because you are learning better. This is partly because teachers plan subjects and lessons which interest you, so you enjoy learning. We feel that some of you need harder work in some lessons to push you on faster. Try and help teachers if you can, by thinking for yourself of harder things you could do next
- We think that teachers could give you more information about how to improve your work. It is really important that you understand what they write in their marking of your books. They take a lot of time with this and their comments will tell you what to do. Then, of course, you have to try to do what they say. We think you will because you are keen to learn.
- You will then soon find that teachers are helping you to make comments on your own work, especially older pupils. They will help you to work out for yourselves how you can improve. We think most of you will be able to do this well and will enjoy it.
- You enjoy taking part in village activities and are learning a lot about being part of the local community. You are also beginning to learn more about different communities here and in other countries. This will help you a lot as you get older.

Thank you again for your welcome and polite behaviour. We hope you enjoy your half-term holiday.