

St Dubricius Church of England VA School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123837
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292810
Inspection date	24 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Priors
Headteacher	Christopher Blazey
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2001
School address	Parsons Street Porlock Minehead TA24 8QJ
Telephone number	01643 862249
Fax number	01643 862237

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Dubricius C of E First School is a small village school in the idyllic surroundings of the Exmoor Forest. It serves the village and a wide catchment area and includes a designated nursery. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. The headteacher was appointed last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Dubricius C of E First School is a good school where the headteacher, staff and governors are dedicated to continuous school improvement. In the last year, leadership and management have become increasingly effective and are now good. The school is well placed to move forward positively. The school has accurately evaluated its strengths and weaknesses, although it is modest in its judgement of its overall effectiveness. The headteacher's good leadership has resulted in significant improvement in standards and provision over the last year. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The school's plans to refine and develop the role of subject leaders are well founded so that they can make an increased contribution to furthering their subjects. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and a broad and enriched curriculum that stimulate their interests and enjoyment of learning. The provision in the Foundation Stage is good, and the children achieve well and are well prepared for Year 1. Pupils respond well to the good provision provided. Their learning is good and they make good progress from below average starting points to reach above average standards by the end of Year 4. The school makes an outstanding contribution to the community it serves through, for example, its support for local activities, and is highly valued by the majority of parents. The school provides good care and support for its pupils. The caring, safe environment makes everyone feels valued. Academic guidance has some shortcomings: pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work through marking and do not know their individual targets. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils behave very well and show great respect for each other. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and all issues have been addressed. The school is having a very positive effect on children's growth towards being well-rounded young people.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve marking and target setting so that individuals know exactly what they must learn to improve their work.
- Extend the role and responsibility of subject leaders so that they have a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses, in order to improve provision in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their time at the school. Attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception Year is below average but most children reach the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Emphasis is placed successfully on promoting a love and enjoyment for school. As a result, children thrive, achieve well and soon become very happy, settled and eager to learn. This positive start provides a highly successful platform for learning that is nurtured and successfully developed in Years 1 and 2. As a result, by the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, where most pupils are confident learners and not afraid to 'have a go'. The school successfully fosters this positive attitude without losing sight of developing pupils' basic skills. Test results are carefully analysed and effective action is taken through intervention groups to support individuals, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Consequently, all groups of pupils continue to progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 4, pupils attain standards that are above average in English and mathematics. The school sets challenging targets and pupils work hard to meet them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils blossom within a community that not only supports and encourages them but provides opportunities for challenge and adventure. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The church is central to spiritual development, with children taking part in many services in the church and the rector regularly leading collective worship. Pupils are encouraged to express emotions by good example and opportunities such as circle time. Their outstanding contribution to the community is evident in the wealth of cultural events they support, including the local carnival and dance and music festivals. They support many charities, with some money going to their link school in Sri Lanka. Behaviour is very good. The very few instances of bullying are quickly sorted out. Pupils respect one another and their environment. No pupil has ever been excluded and pupils show their enjoyment through good attendance. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and the numerous physical activities help keep them fit. They keep safe because they enjoy and take notice of visiting experts such as the lifeguard, police officers and the fire service. Pupils take responsibility eagerly and respond to challenge well, such as organising events through the school council. They are well placed to do well in the next stage of schooling and in the future. They have good basic skills, are socially very competent and enjoy responsibilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is typical throughout the school and has improved markedly through regular monitoring by the headteacher. This ensures that all pupils make good progress, where effective learning is underpinned by the consistent approach of teachers and well-briefed assistants. In the Foundation Stage, there is a strong focus on developing children's early language and their personal, social and emotional skills to ensure they achieve well in these aspects. Very strong relationships and the way in which pupils are managed have successful effects on pupils' personal development. One pupil stated, 'Teachers support you. They give you time, listen and explain things carefully.' The consistent approach to treating pupils positively encourages them to join in and behave very well. This makes it possible for teachers to teach rather than simply control. Staff plan effectively for pupils' wide-ranging abilities. This gives good support to pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the more able pupils. Teachers succeed in making learning enjoyable. However, the high expectations in teaching are not translated through good marking, which is not sufficiently helpful in guiding pupils on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It provides pupils with a wide range of interesting activities whilst ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. It has many strengths, including music and sports. As a parent said, 'there's so much going on'. The school is currently embracing a new curriculum that takes note of the different ways in which pupils learn and breaks down some of the artificial barriers between subjects. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these arrangements on pupils' learning. Increasing use is being made of the outstanding opportunities afforded by the school and local environment. For example, time is spent in the woodland garden or at National Trust properties and physical skills are taught alongside the academic.

Very good use is made of local artists and performers to enrich the curriculum, sometimes culminating in public performances and strengthening community links. Clubs are numerous and well supported.

Provision for basic skills, including ICT, is good. Planning to meet the needs of individual pupils is good, either through additional support in class or in small-group work. Pupils of all abilities report that work is 'not too hard and not too easy'. Provision for personal, social and health education is good, as is preparation for life in a multicultural society.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides an environment of mutual support and encouragement, in which differences are celebrated. Pupils are very well known to the adults in school and, as a result, have plenty of people to turn to in time of need. Parents are confident that children are safe and well cared for in school. Arrangements for transfer to the next school are good, and improving. Formal procedures for safeguarding children, including fire drills and first aid, are in place and sufficient staff are trained. Health and safety checks are in order.

The school has introduced target setting, but the full benefits in raising standards and achievement are not yet realised because the targets are not shared with pupils. Consequently, they are not being guided sufficiently on how they can improve their work and reach the targets set for them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The strong leadership of the headteacher drives the work of the school. He has high expectations to ensure all pupils achieve their best and are happy and safe in school. He continually explores ways to improve the quality of education and receives good support from all the staff, who work effectively as a team. Plans to develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects are well founded to bring further improvement to provision. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good. It clearly identifies areas for improvement, including monitoring of teaching and learning and revising the curriculum. This has already had an impact on improving standards and pupils' enjoyment of school. The school has appropriately identified the need to improve the use of assessment to set individual targets for pupils and to ensure they know how to improve their work, to further raise standards. Most parents are positive about the school and their views are regularly sought and considered. One comment, typical of many, was, 'Parents are very welcome and are actively encouraged into school.' Governance is satisfactory. The governors are developing a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of how they can support the headteacher to improve standards. Many governors have only recently been appointed but are beginning to become more proactive in the strategic monitoring of the school and acting as a 'critical friend'.

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Annex A

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?	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	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.

Annex A

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	3
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	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

25 April 2007

Dear Children

St Dubricius C of E First School, Porlock, Somerset TA24 8QJ.

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed our time with you and looking at your work. We were impressed with how polite and friendly you all were. You are right to be proud of your school, as it is a good school.

What we particularly liked about your school:

- you behave very well, work hard and your headteacher and staff are effective in helping you learn and make good progress
- teachers provide interesting lessons and help you enjoy yourselves and do well in your work
- you are well looked after and that helps to make you feel safe and happy
- you get on well together, show respect to everyone and know how important it is to help and look after others
- you know the importance of eating healthy food and enjoy regular exercise
- there are plenty of things to do outside lessons and many of you join clubs and other activities, which is good.

These are some things the school could do to improve:

- give more advice on how you can make your work even better, through teachers' marking and letting you know your targets
- allow all your teachers the chance to check up on how well you learn in each subject and how subjects can be made more interesting for you.

Best wishes for the future.

Ian Hancock Lead Inspector