

# Highcliffe St Mark Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134987
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	294241
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Burghart

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 category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	489
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Angela Budd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Boynton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Greenways Highcliffe Christchurch BH23 5AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01425 273029
<b>Fax number</b>	01425 270449

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large primary school which was formed in an amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools in September 2005. Children's attainment on entry is broadly average in relation to the expectations for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of those who have English as an additional language. All pupils are fluent in English.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

After a year and a half in existence this is a good school. Under the good leadership of the headteacher, extremely well supported by the governors, two schools have been very successfully fashioned into one. Pupils are happy, staff make a good team, and the learning environment is very good. Standards are above average by the time pupils leave and pupils are achieving well. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are well taught and, as a result, make good progress throughout the school. Children make the most of the good start they are given in Reception, where provision meets their needs well. Virtually all reach the standards expected of them before they join Year 1, and some do better. The school continually strives to be even better and rightly has targeted a weakness in pupils' writing, and in particular how well more-able pupils do in this aspect of English, as a priority for improvement.

Outstanding features include pupils' personal development and well-being, their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and how the school works with parents and outside agencies. It is not surprising that attendance is good. The school is popular and oversubscribed and many parents contacted inspectors to express their appreciation. Pupils are very successfully encouraged to be considerate and play their part in the school as a community. They behave well and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe, and keep fit and healthy. Pupils are well prepared for the future and clearly enjoy school, responding very positively to the good curriculum and outstanding care on offer. Care, guidance and support overall for pupils are good. Academic guidance is effective and helps pupils see how to make improvements. There has been good improvement this year in the use made of assessment information to raise standards, notably in English. In other subjects there is still more to do, particularly in using assessment in setting targets and adapting planning.

The very small number of parents who have concerns about how well the school is run can be confident that leadership and management are good and have positive effects on pupils' academic, as well as personal, development through the good teaching and curriculum. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and resources and staff are well deployed to address priorities for development. Ongoing successful developments, for example, to teaching and how information and communication technology is used, are indications that monitoring by the headteacher and senior leadership team is effective. Subject leaders' involvement in the monitoring process is, as yet, underdeveloped. However, the school is establishing a good track record of continual improvement and has a strong capacity for future development.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing to ensure that potentially higher-attaining pupils always reach the levels that they are capable of.
- Develop the monitoring roles of subject leaders and the part they play in the overall leadership and management of the school.
- Improve the use made of assessment information to set targets and modify planning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils are achieving well. Children make good progress in Reception and nearly all reach what is expected of them by the time they move to Year 1, with some exceeding these goals. Good progress continues throughout the school, with standards

above average in reading and slightly above in mathematics at the end of Year 2, and above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Achievement in writing is weaker, with fewer more-able pupils reaching higher-than-average levels for their age. This was recognised by the school after the 2006 national tests and assessments, and improving pupils' performance is at the heart of the school development plan. Ongoing assessments of pupils' work indicate that standards are rising and that pupils are making good progress. The school is on course to reach its challenging targets this year.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good, and often very good, progress against the targets of their individual education plans. Most do well to reach, or very nearly reach, average levels by the time they leave the school.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and a real strength of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils behave well. That attendance is above average is a clear indication that pupils enjoy school and feel safe. 'It's fun here!' was a typical comment. Pupils are confident and respond particularly well to the atmosphere of trust that is based on the outstanding relationships. Pupils show that they care about their school and are very considerate towards others. From the time that they spend in Reception learning how to take turns, share and work and play with others, children make very good progress in their personal development.

Pupils leave the school well prepared for future study and for life in general. The school's aim to produce well-rounded young people is very much in keeping with its Christian ideals and is well met. Pupils readily take responsibility, for example, as 'playground buddies' who help to see that break-time activities are open to everyone. The school council takes the lead in fundraising for the school and for charity. There are many examples of pupils contributing to the life of the community and enjoying very positive links with the church and local organisations. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. It is no wonder that the school is in the final phase of accreditation as a Healthy School.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good teaching leads to good learning and good progress. There is a real strength in how teachers plan and prepare lessons which pupils find interesting and enjoyable. Well-qualified teaching assistants work well with teachers. They make a very positive contribution, not only in supporting pupils with learning difficulties but in working with groups of all abilities. Relationships are excellent and there is an atmosphere of trust in all classes which encourages pupils to join in discussions and activities, and learn from their mistakes. The school provides opportunities for the training of prospective teachers and teaching assistants. Staff are seen by colleges and the local authority as setting a good example and offering effective mentorship.

Because teaching is well monitored, staff are well supported in their efforts to make improvements. This has been most successful to date in improving the quality of questioning and developing how pupils' work is marked. Outstanding examples of teaching were seen in music and English, and school records indicate that such quality is frequently the case. There

have been marked improvements in how well pupils are challenged in terms of different ability levels within the class or set, especially in English. However, there is still room to raise expectations of what more-able pupils are capable of achieving in writing. There is a close link between this area for improvement and assessment not always being used effectively in Years 3 to 6 to identify potential and set targets.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and relevant to pupils' needs and interests. Enrichment is outstanding and includes themed weeks, visits, visitors, residential trips and other extra-curricular opportunities. There are also excellent opportunities for pupils to start learning modern foreign languages. The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal, social and health education, as well as giving excellent support to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

As the school is in its second year, the curriculum is still being developed and new initiatives are settling down. The impact of action to increase cross-curricular links has still to have full effect, but there are positive signs, not least of which is in pupils' obvious enjoyment. Ensuring that the more able pupils are extended by the curriculum available to them is an area for development already identified by the school. Improvements are in hand, for example, with a growing emphasis on planning for gifted and talented pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good overall, with the care aspect being outstanding. Staff make the most of excellent relationships to get to know their pupils well. There are excellent procedures to ensure pupils are safeguarded and there is a strong link between these and the fact that pupils say they feel safe at school. As one Year 6 pupil summed it up, 'There is always someone to turn to.' Assessment procedures are particularly good in English where information from assessment is being used effectively to set targets and raise standards. Assessment systems are not so well developed in other subjects, especially for Years 3 to 6, with the effect that teachers cannot yet be sure that they are expecting enough of some pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. An outstanding feature is the successful teamwork of the headteacher, staff and governors, who have worked together to establish a school which builds on the strengths of its two predecessors. The staff have been drawn together as a good team, well led by the headteacher. They contribute effectively to deciding the priorities of the school development plan. Self-evaluation is good. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for further development. The leadership team are actively involved in monitoring and analysing the school's performance and this has resulted in good achievement and above-average standards. Subject leaders are beginning to play a part in the evaluation process, with notable success so far in English, special educational needs and the Foundation Stage. However, in other subjects there is still more to do to measure the success of provision.

Governance is outstanding. Resources and staff are very well deployed and the school is efficiently run for below-average per pupil costs. Governors have an excellent awareness and impressive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and prompt and challenge the school very effectively. They are constantly evaluating the impact of management decisions on pupils' learning. The school has developed well since it opened, for example, in increasing the effectiveness of teaching and the relevance of the curriculum. Together with the very clear vision and very good systems already in place, this underpins a strong capacity to improve. The school's foundation for the future is secure.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. Your polite, friendly welcome and good behaviour do you credit. They are examples of your outstanding personal development which means you are being very successfully helped to grow up as what we call in the report 'well-rounded young people'.

Yours is a good school which is getting better all the time because it is well run by the headteacher and the governors. Staff take excellent care of you. Their good teaching helps you to make good progress and reach good standards. There is room for improvement in your writing (especially those of you who are in top sets), but we can see that the school knows this already and is doing something about it. Teachers are working at ways to make the good curriculum even more interesting, but you obviously enjoy most of what you do in school, particularly extra-curricular activities and themed weeks in art, music and sport. The Leeson House trip for Year 5 sounds a real treat.

- Even good schools can improve. You can help by continuing to work hard. In order to be even more successful we have asked the staff to:
- make more use of the information they get from assessing your work to measure how well you are doing
- encourage subject leaders to find out more about what goes on in their subjects in order to decide what to do next. We know that this works well in English so teachers have a good system to work with.

We would especially like to thank those of you on the school council who talked to us about the school and how successful it is. We can see that all of you have an excellent understanding of how to keep fit and stay healthy. Good luck with the 'Healthy School' application.