

Marksbury CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109199
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309923
Inspection date	14 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Geoff Burgess

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Allen Smith
Headteacher	Lucy Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Marksbury Bath BA2 9HS
Telephone number	01761 470628
Fax number	01761 470628

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' standards and progress; the influence of the school's provision on pupils' standards; whether pupils' personal development and well-being, the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage and the care, guidance and support for pupils are all outstanding as the school evaluates them to be. Evidence was gathered from: analysis of pupils' performance in national tests; scrutiny of the school's records on pupils' progress and the targets set for them; first-hand observation of the school's work; discussions with school leaders, other staff and pupils; analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire; and scrutiny of documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small school serves a rural area between Bath and Bristol. The school is now at full capacity, a significant number of pupils having entered the school in recent years other than at the usual time of joining. Almost all pupils are White British, with few eligible for free school meals. Most children start school with attainment at the level expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average. However, many pupils who joined the school late have required extra help.

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, much enjoyed by its pupils, admired by their parents and valued by the local community. A parent speaks for many by describing it as 'a welcoming, warm and caring school which works with and alongside the village and parents.'

The school has several outstanding features. It has invested heavily in its Reception class provision to good effect so that children make an excellent start to their education. The impact of this is spreading through the school. The school takes great care to support its pupils' well-being and all-round development throughout the rest of the school. Parents are particularly pleased that the school provides 'an environment where children feel safe, are valued and are helped to achieve, not only academically but personally and socially'. This is well demonstrated by the creativity with which every inch of space in the cramped accommodation and difficult site has been developed for pupils to use in their work and play.

With small numbers of pupils, standards vary according to the make-up of each year group, ranging from exceptionally high to well below average in recent years. However, in almost all year groups, overall standards are above average. Prior to 2005, standards in Year 2 had been below average, especially in reading and writing. Since then, they have been above average, with the improving trend shown in the school's records and in pupils' current work throughout the school. Individual records show that, with good teaching, overall achievement is good although, in the recent past, this was masked by the impact of some pupils who joined the school late with negative attitudes to learning. The school acknowledges that standards in writing have not improved as much as in other subjects and is working towards helping pupils to catch up in this area.

Parents value very highly the contribution of staff to their children's good progress. They are especially pleased that all staff are so approachable and helpful. One describes staff as 'excellent, always willing to listen, and support parents'. Staff make very good use of high quality assessment and tracking procedures to ensure that everyone is fully aware of what pupils need to do to improve. Expectations are high, with very effective procedures for guiding and supporting pupils with LDD and stretching higher attainers.

Pupils are encouraged to have a 'can do' attitude and every pupil's efforts are valued. A key element in the positive way pupils' approach their time in school is the quality and variety of the many activities provided for them in and out of class. A parent comments, 'The opportunities given to the children in respect of visits outside school, sports, music etc are amazing considering the size of the school'. Teachers have the confidence to innovate and try new ideas. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being involved in all the activities, saying that school is, 'never boring – often fun'.

At the core of all the above is the excellent way the school promotes pupils' personal development. A parent praises the school for developing 'vital social skills such as respect for others, patience, support and caring for those less able or fortunate' and 'enlightening the children to the increasing cultural and religious diversity of our country'. Pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good in all situations, from the reflective quiet of an assembly taken by the local rector, to the energetic play on a blustery playground. Every effort is made to ensure pupils are happy and safe and know how to look after themselves and each other. Pupils are very aware of what they need to do to stay fit and healthy and, with limited space on site, the school

does all it can to achieve this. An important element in this is the weekly swim at a local pool, involving all pupils from the Reception class upwards.

Through the school's very close relationship with the local community, pupils are regularly involved in community events. In addition, many members of the local community are actively involved in the school, enriching the learning opportunities. Pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and older pupils have many responsibilities around the school, such as for running the 'Huff and Puff' sessions. Pupils were involved in drawing up the school's 'golden rules' and many of the playground improvements were developed in consultation with them. Together with pupils' good basic skills, all of these opportunities for personal development prepare pupils very well for moving on to secondary school and their later lives.

The good quality of the school's leadership and management can be seen in the very high regard in which the school is held by pupils, parents and the local community, the high quality of the learning environment, the many improvements made and the school's solid track record in national testing. The headteacher's contribution to this has been vital. Described by parents as 'very enthusiastic, caring and positive', she acts as an excellent role model for the whole school community. With the very good support and encouragement of the governing body, her energy, drive and ability to get the best out of everyone has seen the school, in the words of a parent, 'continue to go from strength to strength'. Openness and good self-evaluation based on thorough monitoring are at the heart of the school's success. With challenging targets and ambitious plans for the future, the school's capacity to improve is undiminished.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The small number of children in the Foundation Stage start school full time in September in a well-equipped and well-staffed Reception class. As a result of a rich range of activities and the individual attention they receive, children make excellent progress in all aspects of their development. The school's records show that most children achieve the goals expected at the end of the Reception Year well ahead of time. Children are very well prepared for moving on to the National Curriculum with very good basic and social skills and a love of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help pupils to do as well in writing as they do in other subjects.

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	1

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

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

15 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marksbury CE Primary School, Bath, BA2 9HS

I really enjoyed my day with you recently despite the wet weather. I was very impressed with the way you all worked and played so well together and by the way everyone in the school knows what is expected of them. It is a shame you haven't got a bit more space but the way every inch in your school has been used to give you places to work and play is very clever. Like you, I think Marksbury is a good school, with some parts outstanding.

I found these good things:

- children in the Reception class settle in very quickly and do very well
- your behaviour is excellent; you work very hard and do your best
- everybody gets on very well together and the school is a calm and happy place
- your teachers and helpers are good at helping you learn and you make good progress
- you are good at swimming and enjoy lots of other extra activities during and after school
- the things you have to do in class are interesting and fun
- you know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to
- grown-ups do all they can to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible
- your headteacher is very enthusiastic about your school and she helps everyone to do their best.

To make things even better, I have asked your school to:

- help you to write as well as you read and do maths.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by doing your best. Again, thank you for all you do to make your school as good as it is. I enjoyed sharing it with you for a short time.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Burgess Lead inspector

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Geoff Burgess
Lead inspector