

Widcombe CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109259
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309943
Inspection dates	10–11 September 2007
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fran Bryden
Headteacher	Ann Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2003
School address	Pulteney Road Bath BA2 4JG
Telephone number	01225 310139
Fax number	01225 318310

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Widcombe C of E Junior School serves an advantaged area of central Bath. There are fewer-than-average pupils with learning difficulties and none with disabilities. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was on maternity leave and her role was covered by an interim headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Widcombe C of E Junior School provides a satisfactory education. The headteacher has worked effectively since her appointment to address areas of concern, carefully monitoring the school's performance to identify and tackle weaknesses. The impact of this monitoring has yet to be demonstrated in relation to pupils' achievement, although successful work done in the last year to raise the quality of teaching and develop the curriculum, indicates that the school has satisfactory capacity to continue on its journey of improvement. The school's vision for improvement is shared by the leadership team but some have yet to develop their monitoring skills so that they can play a fuller part in driving the school forward.

Pupils start and leave school with well-above-average standards. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and achieve satisfactorily overall. However, some weaknesses in teaching means that their progress is not even. Boys and pupils with learning difficulties do not progress as quickly as expected because work is not always well matched to their needs. While pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory, it lags behind that in mathematics and science.

Pupils' personal development is good. One of the defining features of the school is that pupils are very well behaved and relate very well to one another and to adults. They enjoy school and attend regularly, taking part in all school activities with maturity and enthusiasm. Pupils make a major contribution to their own personal development. The good curriculum, with its many and various opportunities, makes another strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Parents' views of the school are largely positive. They are becoming more involved in school life and many indicate that they appreciate the reforms being made.

Teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory although there are some weaknesses. While most lessons enable pupils to make good progress, some do not provide the required challenge and support for the full range of pupils' abilities. Assessment, while developing, is not used consistently to help pupils and teachers improve their practice. Pupils' excellent approach to learning and well established work habits support their progress. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils correctly say they feel safe and well cared for. However, they do not always receive the helpful academic support and guidance they need to know what are the next steps in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all pupils, particularly boys and those with learning difficulties, are provided with challenge and support, particularly in English, so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Ensure all pupils understand the next steps in their learning.
- Develop the monitoring skills of all staff with leadership responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the time they leave, pupils reach standards which are well above average. Their achievement over the four years at the school is satisfactory although there is some variation between groups of pupils and different subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties do not always achieve as well as they might when assessment is not used sufficiently well to ensure that they are challenged correctly in lessons. Boys' achievement, while satisfactory, is not as good as that of the girls and work is in hand to improve this. English standards are above average, but pupils' achievement

is satisfactory because the teaching of literacy skills is not always effective. In the last year, the school has started to tackle these weaknesses. Satisfactory progress has been made and standards remain high, although the impact of initiatives to improve performance is yet to be seen in raising pupils' achievement beyond a satisfactory level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In lessons, they listen and concentrate well. Behaviour and relationships are very good and sometimes outstanding. One pupil said, 'Everyone is kind and it's a perfect school'. Pupils have good social skills, and feel that the school's behaviour policy is fair. Their adoption of safe practices is good and they are confident that bullying is dealt with effectively. They understand the need to be responsible when playing and know how to keep safe, for example, when using the Internet. Their independence and willingness to work in teams contribute to the satisfactory development of skills that will support their future economic well-being. The school council gives pupils a voice in improving the school and ensures pupils make a satisfactory contribution to how the school community is run. Pupils value opportunities to take responsibility, such as acting as 'buddies' to new pupils. Their adoption of healthy practices is satisfactory and pupils have a good understanding of healthy foods. They enjoy physical education lessons and understand why exercise is important. Many participate in clubs and activities, further supporting their health and well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has worked hard in the last year to develop teaching and, in consequence, most lessons are well planned and taught and learning is well promoted. Pupils' exemplary behaviour and attitudes contribute positively to their learning. They enter school in Year 3 with very good learning habits and enjoy opportunities to collaborate in pairs and groups. They are courteous and articulate and their keenness to learn contributes well to the progress they make. A few lessons are uninspiring and lack challenge. Work is not always well matched to pupils' needs so that more able pupils are not always kept at full stretch and those who need support do not receive it consistently. Teaching often places too little emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills, especially their writing, across all subjects. These factors account for variations in achievement. Pupils do not always receive enough information to help them improve their work. Some parents express frustration that homework is often unmarked. Despite these weaknesses, pupils' learning and achievement overall are satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved in the last year and contributes positively to pupils' learning and their personal development. There has been a burgeoning of extra-curricular activities and parents and pupils speak warmly of the range of activities on offer. There are good opportunities for sport, during and after school, especially through the involvement of the local rugby club. There is a great range of artistic opportunities, particularly in music. The school uses the local area well as a resource and pupils happily take advantage of the numerous trips available. The

teaching of French is gradually being extended from the present Years 3 and 4 to the rest of the school.

While there is still variation for different groups of learners, work is now being done to ensure that the curriculum is better adapted to meet the learning needs of all of its pupils. As yet there is no common policy to promote better writing across all subjects of the curriculum to help improve achievement in this area. With the appointment of a new special needs co-ordinator and better support for pupils, provision for pupils with learning difficulties has improved and is now satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a caring school which looks after pupils well and ensures they are safe and happy. One parent commented, 'The school is friendly with a lovely atmosphere'. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety are thorough. The care and support that the school offers is strengthened by close liaison with outside agencies and organisations. Pupils experiencing difficulties are well supported through various strategies, such as drama therapy. Pupils do not always receive clear feedback in lessons and in their books on how well they are doing academically or how to improve. Teachers do not consistently mark work well or regularly share targets with pupils to help them understand the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and management and has created a clear vision for the school. She has accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and taken decisive actions to improve teaching with the clear aim of raising achievement. These include improving the availability of assessment information to help teachers track pupils' progress. Teaching and other areas are now systematically monitored. The school's academic targets have in recent years been inaccurate and have done little to promote achievement. Now, with better assessment, target setting has improved and targets are suitably challenging. Subject leaders and teachers receive good support but their leadership skills are not yet fully developed.

The interim headteacher is building on these recent and important improvements to ensure that the school continues to develop. For example, she has introduced a more rigorous method of monitoring the progress of each pupil. Despite failure to address some of the issues raised in the previous inspection report, recent significant reforms in monitoring and assessment have started the long process of change. The school has convincing plans for the future and its capacity for improvement is now satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are better informed than in the past and this enables them to ask searching questions and to take a more strategic role. Parents recognise the headteacher's effective leadership, commenting on the many positive changes that have been made.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

12 September 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Widcombe C of E Junior School, Bath BA2 4JG

Thank you for being so helpful and polite when the inspectors visited your school recently. We were very pleased to hear how keen you were and how much you liked school life.

Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education. There are some things it does really well:

- The standards of your work are better than in most schools.
- The range of subjects you learn and, especially, the variety of interesting additional activities is good.
- You are growing up as mature, caring and responsible young people. Your behaviour is often excellent and you get on very well with other people. This helps make you good learners: well done!
- All teachers care about you and make sure you are kept safe and well.
- The school has good links with other organisations to provide more variety for you.

Now we have asked the school to work on these things:

- Make sure that all of you do as well as you possibly can especially in English. We have particularly asked that the school helps boys and those of you who find learning more difficult.
- We have asked teachers to give you more information on how well you are doing and help you to understand what you need to do next to improve your work.
- Make sure that all the adults know how to check on how well your school is doing so that it continues to improve even more.

Once again, thanks for all your help. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Carnaghan Lead inspector



12 September 2007

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Lead inspector