

Mrs Ethelston's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113439
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311269
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Colin Lee

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	144
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Collett
Headteacher	Andrea Rice
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Pound Lane Uplyme Lyme Regis DT7 3TT
Telephone number	01297 442210
Fax number	01297 445127

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated in detail the following issues:

achievement in Years 1 and 2

pupils' achievement and standards in writing throughout the school, and

the effectiveness of assessment procedures.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, other staff, pupils and governors, and from the parental questionnaires. Lessons were observed. School self-evaluation and other documentation and samples of pupils' work were analysed. 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.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Half the pupils are from the village of Uplyme and the remainder are from neighbouring villages or the nearby town of Lyme Regis. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. Pupils are taught in five mixed-age classes, each including pupils from two year groups. The headteacher was appointed permanently to the post in January 2008, having previously been acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Excellent teaching and leadership and management help pupils to make exceptional progress in their academic and their personal development. It has a delightful family atmosphere, which is one of many features that impress parents and carers. There is a strong sense of teamwork, with staff, governors, parents and carers working closely together.

Pupils' achievement is excellent. They make very good progress from the moment they start in the Foundation Stage and rates of progress increase steadily as they move up through the school. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils attain high standards, especially in English, mathematics and science. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is broadly in line with what is typical at this age, although there are weaknesses in aspects of children's language and social and creative development. By the end of their first year in school, most children catch up in these weaker aspects and they exceed the expected levels in the other areas of learning. Pupils now in Years 3 and 4 were far less successful in their time in the Foundation Stage, which had a knock-on effect on the standards they reached by the end of Year 2. The current Year 2 pupils' achievement is much better and is helped by the close liaison between classes and the seamless progression in learning throughout pupils' first three years in school. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and well above average in science.

A trend of rising standards by the end of Year 6 is continuing. National test results were high in 2007 and the current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain even higher standards. This reflects excellent progress since they ended Year 2. The progress has been consistent in all aspects of their work and is exemplified by their writing, a subject that has been a whole-school priority throughout this school year. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are producing imaginative writing of the highest quality in their current work on myths and legends. Much writing by other pupils is equally impressive and often arises from their work in other topics, which reflects the way that the curriculum is planned so that subjects are linked together. This planning is exceptionally thorough and is based on the progressions in the skills in each subject that pupils should acquire. By ensuring that topics build up these skills step by step, the school has developed a creative, exciting curriculum that incorporates a wealth of stimulating learning experiences.

The curriculum makes learning exciting and enjoyable. Teachers make all learning activities relevant to individual pupils' stages of development. Within literacy and numeracy, the quality of pupils' learning is high because planning is based on constant assessment of pupils' needs. Tasks are closely matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils have clear targets for their learning and they are highly motivated by these, particularly in literacy, where teachers make constant reference to targets throughout lessons. This is less evident in numeracy lessons and, consequently, pupils are not so driven by the desire to reach a target and to move on to the next one. This makes progress in numeracy marginally slower than in reading and writing. There is, similarly, more reference to targets and learning objectives in teachers' formal assessments of pupils' writing each half term than in the corresponding assessment of mathematics. Nevertheless, the overall quality of learning and teaching across the whole curriculum is excellent. Pupils' only noticeable weakness within their learning is the limited ability of some to use the specific vocabulary of a subject when talking about it. For example, explanations of how answers are arrived at in mathematics often lack clarity. They know what they did but have difficulty explaining it in mathematical terms. In science, where knowledge levels are very high, written

work uses technical vocabulary well, but that same vocabulary is not used nearly so confidently in oral responses to questions.

Pupils not only enjoy their learning in lessons but speak with great enthusiasm about the many clubs and activities outside the school day. They are similarly appreciative of other aspects of school life. When the school council were asked what is special about the school, they unanimously agreed with the pupil who said that the most special thing is 'the way that everyone cares for everyone else'. This sums up pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being as much as their excellent behaviour, their tremendous contribution to the school community and their appreciation of the high levels of care, guidance and support that they receive. The school's knowledgeable teaching assistants play a vital role in that support, which is a major reason why pupils with learning difficulties make such outstanding progress. Relationships between pupils are a delight and most especially between the older and the younger. All pupils thrive on responsibility, whether as a school councillor or as a member of the ECO club, or as a play leader when in Year 2 and Year 5, and particularly conscientiously when in Year 6 they take a Reception child to the weekly church service. Pupils have excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, eating fruit and keen to be involved in physical education and sporting activities. They have a very mature understanding of safe practices in school and in the home. Pupils' outstanding academic progress and their excellent social skills prepare them very well for future stages in their education and their eventual economic well-being.

The school's leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is the driving force behind recent improvements and she receives excellent support from the senior management team. All staff work closely together in analysing pupils' work, assessing their progress and planning the curriculum. The governing body is an excellent source of guidance and support, working closely with staff to move the school forward. Being a small school, all staff have several areas of whole-school responsibility, and they carry these out very successfully. As subject leaders, they have very good awareness of standards across the school in their subjects and produce clear annual plans of action for improvement. The school knows itself well, although it is cautious in its self-assessment because it seeks to constantly improve all aspects of its work. It has an excellent capacity for that improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children settle quickly into school life as a result of excellent liaison with parents and carers and the main pre-school provider. Outstanding teaching and learning and a well-planned curriculum enable children to progress rapidly. Their progress is checked constantly in all areas of learning and there is detailed recording and evaluation of the children's achievements. The children work confidently and conscientiously without adult support and organise themselves and their resources. They take responsibility for their own learning and they know their targets, known as 'challenges'. Every part of the attractive, well-organised classroom is used very effectively to stimulate learning and celebrate children's achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' competence in speaking about their learning by developing their use of subject-specific vocabulary.
- Increase the use of target setting in teaching and assessment of mathematics.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Mrs Ethelston's C of E Primary School, Uplyme DT7 3TT

Thank you for making me welcome in your school and for talking to me so willingly. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing you at work. You told me how much you enjoy going to school. This is not surprising because you have an outstanding school that is very successful in helping you to learn. The school does many excellent things. This is what it does particularly well:

- You are making excellent progress in your work.
- By the time you reach Year 6, many of you are reaching very high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Your behaviour is excellent, and this makes your school a friendly, pleasant place where everyone helps one another.
- In addition to your excellent School Council, many more of you have responsibilities around the school that you carry out splendidly, and this helps the school run smoothly.
- Teaching is excellent and your teachers work hard to plan interesting things for you to do in your lessons. This is helping you to learn very well.
- All the adults look after you excellently and make sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The headteacher leads the school superbly, and all the adults, including the governors, work very well together to improve it.

I have two recommendations to help your school to get even better:

- Improve your speaking about what you are learning in different lessons.
- Make more use of the targets you have to help your learning in mathematics.

I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Mrs Ethelston's C of E Primary School to be an even better school.

Colin Lee Lead inspector

Annex B

2 July 2008

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Colin Lee
Lead inspector