

Bridport, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113757
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311360
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Anne Rimer
Headteacher	K Rawling
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Skilling Hill Road Bridport DT6 5LA
Telephone number	01308 423065
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

St Mary's is situated in the town of Bridport and attracts pupils from the surrounding area. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. There are a low number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils whose first language is not English is also low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is well above average. Attendance is below average with higher than average rates for authorised and unauthorised absences. The number of pupils who join and leave the school is also above average. Building works have begun on site to provide a children's centre. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is usually well below average.

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 and improving school. The newly appointed headteacher is successfully building on the work of her predecessor. In a short space of time, the headteacher has created a strong and supportive team in the school. This has enabled staff to work closely and to share good practice with each other. The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the education their children receive and recognise these qualities. They really feel that 'the teaching staff care enormously and work as a team in all aspects of school life.' The behaviour of pupils is good, they are charming in conversation and are prepared to do their best in lessons. Pupils also make a good contribution to their community and to the life of their school and are well prepared for their future adult life. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The school is increasing pupils' access to information and communication technology (ICT) with the purchase of a greater number of laptops.

Teaching throughout the school is good and most lessons provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils with teaching assistants providing strong support. They are helping pupils with LDD to increase their self-esteem and to make academic progress. Pupils are encouraged to judge their own progress at the end of many lessons, helping them to identify the steps they can take to make their work better. However, this good practice has not yet been adopted across the school and the more able pupils are often not clear what they need to do to produce their best work.

A strong feature of the school is the expressive arts provision, with dance, drama and music making a significant contribution to the identity of the school. Care has been taken to adapt the curriculum to meet the particular needs of pupils and to ensure that they make consistent progress. Work on the Jurassic Coast has helped pupils gain a better understanding of their local environment and has been used to establish international links. Pupils clearly enjoy lessons and the wide range of after-school activities on offer. Despite recent improvements, the level of attendance is still too low. Given the low starting points and the learning needs of many pupils on arrival, pupils make good progress. By the time they leave Year 6, most have reached national average standards. Standards have risen across the school over the last two years. The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has managed to raise standards through the effective actions of the school's leadership team.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children receive consistently good teaching and support from dedicated teachers and teaching assistants. Good arrangements with local pre-school settings help children to settle in quickly and confidently. From an early age, they feel safe and happy and are encouraged to be independent. Those children who experience difficulties are given effective support. Adults have high expectations, provide clear routines and enable children to build positive relationships. Many children arrive at school with low levels of language development and numeracy. The staff use individual data well to identify those who need additional help and support. As a result, the majority of children make good gains by the time they transfer into Year 1. The outside area lacks adequate challenge and stimulation. The school is well aware of this and children in the class have already planned and put on display the improvements they would like to see.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve rates of attendance by introducing a more rigorous and responsive monitoring system
- raise standards across the school by communicating clearly to all pupils how to produce work of the highest quality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are rising and progress is good across the school. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average because pupils are set challenging targets and good teaching is helping them reach, and sometimes exceed, them. The school's recently adopted approach to teaching reading has improved the progress made in literacy in Years 1 and 2. Pupils are able to build on this firm foundation so that they continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 in all subjects. Standards at Key Stage 2 are rising and are now average, but they vary from year to year because a high proportion of pupils join the school during their last year of primary education. The achievement of pupils with LDD is also good because they receive effective support. The dedicated team of staff monitor their progress carefully and are quick to respond to any lapses in progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils enjoy their education and become confident and articulate learners who are well placed to move on to secondary school. Work to achieve the UNICEF Rights Respecting School award is encouraging them to have a more active voice and take greater responsibility for their own learning. As a result, pupils demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong and the great majority behave well in lessons and round the school. Poor behaviour is rare and is dealt with very effectively. Pupils appreciate the need to act safely and demonstrate a keen awareness of the risks they face in their lives outside school. They understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and have responded enthusiastically to the introduction of nutritious hot meals. Daily timetabled fitness breaks, together with physical education lessons and a range of sporting activities, are popular and help to improve levels of physical fitness and concentration.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They treat one another with care and respect and their awareness of other cultures and societies is greatly enhanced by the school's UNESCO designation. Pupils enjoy opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning but the progress of a small minority is hampered by their poor attendance. The school is beginning to tackle this issue and there are early indications that average attendance rates are rising. Staff and governors recognise that this is still an area for development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and so pupils make good progress across the school. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their learning in pairs at appropriate moments. As a result, pupils are able to move on in their learning. The pupils respond well to praise and

encouragement and this brings out the best in them and shows in their positive attitudes. Regular assessment tasks provide accurate individual data and greater use is being made of this information to track progress and set termly targets. A strength of the school is the way in which teaching assistants are deployed flexibly to support learning. Activities are planned to meet the individual needs of pupils, although higher achievers need to be set challenging targets consistently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum and other activities is good and provides suitable opportunities for those pupils with LDD to make good progress. There is good provision for numeracy and literacy and improving provision for ICT. The school offers a wide range of after-school activities and these are popular and well attended. High quality provision of expressive arts is very well regarded by the local community. Adaptations to the history and geography curriculum have given pupils a far deeper understanding of their surroundings and will help them to understand other cultures. The good provision of personal, social and health education is seen in the good standards of behaviour and the caring attitudes of all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school has a secure and caring ethos and there are comprehensive arrangements for ensuring pupils' health, safety and protection. Consequently, pupils feel safe and are confident about approaching staff for support and help. Pupils with significant LDD are guided and supported very effectively by teachers and teaching assistants. There are very good procedures to tackle bullying and the few instances are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully throughout the school. Marking often provides pupils with very constructive feedback on their work but this is not done consistently well across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The capable headteacher has created a strong and united team with a common sense of purpose. She has a clear focus on raising standards and achievement, which is already reaping rewards. Governors display an impressive understanding of the school and are kept well informed. All members of the school leadership are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have been effective in raising standards. Recent restructuring of middle management has ensured that continuing improvement has become a shared responsibility. The inclusive and warm nature of the staff promotes the personal development and well-being of all learners. Parents appreciate the improved communication and recognise the work that the school does in developing links with the community. The building of a new children's centre has already created links that support families and pupils. A wide range of outside agencies is involved in providing advice and practical support to the benefit of many pupils. The leadership and management of the school are good. They provide the school with a good capacity to improve yet further.

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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
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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	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**

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Bridport, DT6 5AL Thank you for sharing your school with us while we carried out our inspection. We noticed your good behaviour around the school and the friendly way that you spoke to us. Your new headteacher has started well and is choosing adults to work in your school who are happy to talk to each other and share their best ideas. You have many kind and caring staff in your school and they know how to help you learn. They often let you know how special you are. We saw how much you enjoyed the singing, dancing and acting that goes on in your school. Now we know why your families and friends enjoy watching your performances so much. We also liked the good pieces of art on show around the school - you should let other people know how good it is.

The teachers have thought carefully about the things they teach you. For example, lessons about your local area and the Jurassic Coast will help you understand about the area you live in. You will soon be able to explain this to people from around the world. In lessons, you pay attention and are ready to work hard. We think that you work well together, especially when you talk to your learning partners. The work you are doing every day in your reading is really helping you. This is why it is so important that you do not miss too many days because it makes it hard to catch up. Those of you who miss a lot of school will find it really hard.

Your school's test results have got better in the last few years and much better in the last two years. We think they could go even higher if you are told clearly how to do your very best in each lesson. You will know when you are doing well because you will hear a lot of celebration noises!

Thank you and good luck.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield HMI