

Puddletown Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113765
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311365
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Crankshaw
Headteacher	Vivienne Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	High Street Puddletown Dorchester DT2 8RY
Telephone number	01305 848206
Fax number	01305 848094

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average school. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Nearly all are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies each year but is presently slightly below the national average. The main school building is old and cramped and due to be replaced at some time in the future.

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. It has a welcoming and inclusive ethos and prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Success is founded on outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage and this ensures that children achieve very well during their first year at school and receive an excellent start to their education. Pupils achieve well in all other year groups because of consistently good teaching and attain standards that exceed expectations in Year 4. However, standards in writing, especially boys' writing, lag behind the standards pupils attain in reading and mathematics in all year groups.

The school has recovered well from a period of considerable staffing changes since the last inspection because of the dedication and enthusiasm of teaching staff and the good quality of leadership and management, especially of the headteacher, who has ensured that governors and staff have shared her vision for school improvement. They have worked well together to ensure the school has evaluated its performance effectively and identified and implemented improvement strategies where needed. This is a school that demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils enjoy school, although their attendance rates are below average. They have a good community spirit and describe their school as a friendly place. Their personal development and well-being is good. The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with strengths in spiritual and social development. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour, their outstanding respect for the needs of others and in their growing awareness of the wider world. Pupils make sensible and healthy choices and have a good understanding of the need to keep safe. They say they feel well looked after and know there is someone for them to turn to should the need arise.

The curriculum is good. It caters for the needs of pupils well and is enhanced by a range of activities that further develops pupils' enjoyment of learning. The effectiveness of the governing body is good and has improved since the last inspection. It offers a realistic level of challenge and support to the school and individual governors fulfil their duties well. Procedures for care, guidance and support are good and contribute fully to pupils' sense of well-being. Parents value the good level of care the school offers children and this was reflected in comments, such as 'Puddletown First has a lovely ethos – it is happy and caring', in parents' questionnaire replies.

The school has developed effective systems to check on the progress of individual pupils. However, although pupils have individual learning targets, not all of them understand what their targets are or what they need to do to reach them.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children achieve very well in the Reception class because of outstanding teaching, which ensures that they make excellent progress from average and, in the case of boys' language development, below-average starting points. Excellent leadership ensures that the needs of all children are met very effectively in a classroom that provides a very stimulating learning environment. The class teacher and teaching assistant work very well together to ensure that lessons effectively blend opportunities for independent learning with adult-directed tasks and provide children with opportunities to work together in small groups. Nearly all are on target to surpass

expectations in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is excellent. Children understand the need to share and take turns. Communication skills are built up very effectively. Children talk and listen to others very confidently and are keen to join in with all activities. Mathematical development makes the most of children's improving counting and sorting skills. The topic work approach nurtures their knowledge and understanding of the world as well as encouraging creative skills. Physical development is built up very effectively, especially in the well-designed outdoor area shared with the local pre-school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, especially boys' writing, by improving the ability of pupils to construct sentences accurately, especially when writing longer pieces of work.
- Ensure pupils understand what they need to do to reach their individual learning targets.
- Improve pupils' rates of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage and pupils achieve well in Year 1 to Year 4 because of consistently good teaching which helps build effectively on previous learning. The school's systems to assess pupils' progress quickly identify those who are performing at a lower rate than they should be. They then receive the targeted support they need to make the same good progress as others. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified at an early stage and they receive a consistently good level of support from the school.

Pupils in Year 2 are on course to meet the challenging targets set for them in the 2008 national tests and standards in Year 4 are above expectations, with the exception of writing. Initiatives to improve achievement in this subject have met with only partial success. The school is aware that standards in writing, especially boys' writing, still lag behind standards in other subjects in all year groups. It recognises the need to improve the ability of pupils to construct sentences accurately, especially when writing longer pieces of work, if standards are to rise.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly and polite and display a great deal of care and consideration for others. They know there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem and say they feel safe and that adults deal quickly with instances of unkind behaviour, especially any rare cases of bullying. Pupils have developed a clear understanding of right and wrong and their good behaviour and positive attitudes reflect this. Visits to places of interest and the school's links with a partner school in Africa help bring learning alive. Such visits provide pupils with experiences of life outside their immediate locality and increase their understanding of the multicultural nature of modern British society. Pupils talk excitedly about their involvement with school and class councils and how these give them a say in school affairs. They say they enjoy school but their attendance rates do not fully reflect this. The school is aware of the need to improve rates of authorised absence, especially regarding pupils taking time off to go on holiday in term time, if attendance is to improve.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their fund raising for different charities and the school's community links, especially their involvement with the 'Puddletown Carnival'. They have a good understanding of the importance of keeping fit and making healthy choices, especially about what they eat. Good teaching, linked to a stimulating curriculum, ensures that pupils make good overall progress in developing their basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in preparation for the next stage of their education, although their writing skills are often less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception year get off to an excellent start because of outstanding teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the rest of the school and caters for the needs of all pupils well. Teachers use a variety of approaches to make learning interesting and to make sure pupils work hard. Lessons are well structured and enjoyable, although there are a few occasions when the pace of learning slackens and pupils' interest sometimes wanes. Teachers work well together with effective teaching assistants to ensure pupils of all abilities are provided with appropriate activities and with the support they need to succeed. As a result, pupils achieve well and attain above-average standards by the end of Year 4.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school because they are provided with a curriculum that meets their needs and interests well. Pupils say they particularly like the fact that different subjects are often linked together, for example, ICT and literacy. However, the school is aware of the need to improve opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills if standards are to improve. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the range of interesting visits and visitors to school that increases their enjoyment of learning and builds up their knowledge of the world outside their rural locality. Good planning and provision for personal, social and health education ensure that pupils are well aware of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular activities and through beneficial links to the local community and to other schools. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and helps these pupils make the same good progress as others.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a pleasant, caring environment within the school and this contributes effectively to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their sense of well-being. Parents value the care their children receive and pupils comment that they feel safe and well looked after. Good induction and transfer arrangements help pupils settle quickly into new routines. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive an effective level of support to make the same good progress as others. Pupils' health and well-being are securely safeguarded and child protection procedures are firmly in place. The quality of teachers' marking is good and helps pupils improve their work. The school has developed good procedures to track pupils' progress and set individual

targets for improvement. However, not all pupils understand what they need to do to reach their individual learning targets and this can affect their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors have worked well to ensure the school has been thorough in analysing its performance. This has enabled the school to identify and sustain existing good practice and to address inconsistencies. Several initiatives have led to recent improvements, for example, raising standards in mathematics, although raising pupils' achievement in writing remains in need of development.

Governors play an active role in school life and are involved in all major decisions. They have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of development. The school works closely with parents. However, a minority of parents do not feel that the school takes their views into account when planning changes. Links with external agencies are good and support pupils' learning well. However, although the school is well resourced, the accommodation is old and cramped and in need of replacement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Puddletown Church of England First School, Dorset DT2 8RY

Thank you for making us feel very welcome during our visit to your school. We really enjoyed our day. We really liked talking to you about what you like the most about your school and seeing you work in lessons.

Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school:

- Yours is a good school that gives you a good start to your education and makes sure you make good progress in learning.
- Your personal development is good. You behave well and enjoy school.
- The quality of care and support you receive from the school is good.
- Your headteacher, her staff and your school governors are working well to make sure that your school continues to improve in the future.

We believe your headteacher and teachers can do something to make your school better. We have asked them to:

- Help you to improve your writing skills, especially boys' writing.
- Try to make sure that you all come to school more often and that less of you go on holiday in term time.
- Make sure that you all know what your learning targets are and what you have to do to improve your work

You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron (Lead inspector)

23 April 2008

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(Lead inspector)