

Sherborne Abbey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113766
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311366
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Shears

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Woods
Headteacher	Lyndon Stockham
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002
School address	Lenthay Road Sherborne DT9 6AQ
Telephone number	01935 812318
Fax number	01935 812318

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sherborne Abbey is an average-sized, purpose-built primary school, set in spacious grounds. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a significant proportion of whom have communication or language problems. The rate of mobility is high. There is a low percentage of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sherborne Abbey is a satisfactory and improving school. Children arrive with standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age, although some aspects of their literacy and mathematical skills are underdeveloped. They make satisfactory progress and leave at the end of Year 6 with average standards. However, standards are beginning to rise at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. The effective senior management team, under the good leadership of the headteacher, have correctly identified the school's strengths and put in effective strategies to address the areas for development. These have impacted on the progress that pupils make and demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe in the caring environment that is created by staff, resulting in good attendance. This contributes much to their good personal development. They behave well, both in lessons and outside. In particular, their spiritual development and their knowledge of and attitudes towards healthy living and keeping safe are outstanding. The cultural development of pupils is not as strong. Their preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. The care of pupils is excellent. The school has robust systems to ensure that they are kept safe and healthy. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including effective links with outside agencies, ensure that these pupils progress well. However, the guidance that most pupils receive to support the next steps in their learning is not consistent enough to ensure that they all make good progress. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. The teaching is good and the effective curriculum is well managed by a good leader. Good progress enables children to enter Year 1 with at least average standards. The teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, resulting in satisfactory progress being made. The pastoral support for pupils is good, giving an effective climate for learning. However, the school is aware that the work given to pupils does not always match their abilities, particularly for the more able, and this hinders them from making better progress. Pupils thoroughly enjoy a good curriculum that includes first-hand experiences, engaging them in practical activities that support their learning. Skills learnt in literacy are increasingly being practised in other subjects, although this is not yet the case in mathematics. A good range of extra-curricular activities are enjoyed by many pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the care that pupils receive. There are good links with the community that extend opportunities for mutual support.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good Foundation Stage provides an activity-based curriculum within a safe, stimulating environment with high quality resources. Children start with skills that are similar to those expected nationally, except in linking sounds to letters, writing and calculation. They make good progress, moving into Year 1 with literacy and numeracy skills that are average. Progress in personal, social and emotional skills is good because children have many opportunities to be independent as well as working and sharing together. Very good relationships are developed between pupils and staff. There are effective relationships with parents, who feel fully involved; one said that the induction to the school is excellent. The inspectors agree that there are very good arrangements for starting school so that children feel confident and secure. Similarly, the carefully thought out arrangements for transition to Year 1 ensure that pupils and parents know and understand the different routines. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good because the curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the learning needs of all children in a way which will inspire and engage them in developing new skills. Most children

make good progress, but the most able are not fully challenged. The recent introduction of a new way of teaching the sounds of letters has had an excellent effect upon pupils' improved abilities to write independently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching to make it consistently good or better so that pupils, particularly the more able, make good progress.
- Improve the quality and consistency of feedback to pupils so that they know how to improve. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1, their standards are at least average in all areas of learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, attaining average standards by the time they leave. The standards in reading in Year 2 and mathematics in Year 6 have been relatively weak in the past. However, there is evidence of a rising trend both at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is because of well focused interventions which have resulted in significantly above average writing standards in Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good personal development of pupils ensures that they are becoming thoughtful, caring people who support each other well. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and a strong sense of fair play. They behave well both in and out of school. There are many opportunities for spiritual reflection that pupils value, although their perception of multicultural life in Britain is less well developed. They enjoy school and this is demonstrated in the good attendance of the vast majority of pupils. They make a good contribution to the school community through the school council, but also to the wider community through activities such as sending postcards to the soldiers in Afghanistan. Pupils' basic skills are satisfactory and prepare them appropriately for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils have good relationships with their teachers, ensuring that behaviour and attitudes to work are good. Teachers use the interactive whiteboard well as a teaching tool, enhancing the enjoyment for pupils and giving them a visual stimulus in their learning. Although teachers share with the pupils the learning objectives in lessons, and use subject-specific vocabulary well, the tasks given to pupils do not always match their abilities. This is particularly so with the more able. Although pupils' self-assessment is established, this is not used sufficiently to support future planning. This limits the amount of progress that pupils make. However, the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because they are ably supported by a team of well-informed teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned to give pupils a rich, balanced experience which results in pupils being interested and involved in their learning. The organisation of the curriculum supports the development of good personal skills. Some good links are made between different subjects in the curriculum. In particular, writing skills are consolidated in other areas, although the use of mathematical skills in other subjects is less well developed. Provision for pupils who need additional support is very carefully planned to ensure that they make the best possible progress, although more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. The curriculum is enriched by making the lessons relevant to real life and adding colour and interest to them. It is supplemented by a number of residential and local visits, visitors and other special learning events such as Victorian and Roman days. A wide range of visitors work with pupils on art, music, drama and photographic activities. A good range of extracurricular clubs, particularly sports clubs, are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Robust systems for safeguarding pupils ensure their safety, and good procedures support pupils with medical needs. Supervision in the playground is good, resulting in pupils feeling safe and happy. This has a positive impact on their personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have appropriate targets with specific success criteria to help them make good progress and these are reviewed regularly. However, the quality of guidance given to all pupils in class does not always help them to know how to improve their work. There are examples of good practice but these are not consistent in all classes or subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong senior management team, ably lead by the headteacher, know the strengths of the school as well as its areas for development, and use this information well to implement initiatives to improve the school. For example, they correctly identified the lower standards in reading at Key Stage 1 and implemented strategies, including the use of reading targets, to address this issue. This has shown good impact in the raising of pupils' progress. Currently they are addressing the mathematical needs of pupils at Key Stage 2, where they have identified weaknesses in the consistency of planning and teaching. Although it is too early to demonstrate impact in this area, the standards are predicted to show improvement. Governors have a very good understanding of the strong personal care and ethos of the school and appreciate the academic challenges that it faces. They are kept well informed, enabling them to support and challenge the school appropriately. Challenging targets are set, with high expectations of success.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2
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?	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	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	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

5 March 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Sherborne Abbey Primary School, Sherborne DT9 6AQ
Thank you for a warm welcome to your school. We enjoyed spending two days with you and finding out about your lovely school. You are very lucky to have such a nice school to work in and an excellent playground and field to play on. You told us that you enjoyed coming to school and trying hard with your learning. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and saw how well you behave, both in the classroom and in the playground. We think that you look after each other very well. You are very good at knowing how to be healthy and keep yourselves safe. Thank you for all the work that you do for your school and the area in which you live. You make a good contribution to the lives of other people. You also told us that you feel safe and cared for in school. We agree that your teachers are very good at making sure that you are happy. We think that you have lots of opportunities to go on trips and have special visitors and we know that you enjoy attending a variety of clubs. We have judged the school to be satisfactory overall, because the progress you make in subjects like English and mathematics is steady but it could be better, particularly for those of you who are capable of doing harder work. In order to improve things, we have asked your school to make sure that you are given work that is right for each of you, and to let you know how to make your work even better. You could help by letting teachers know if you are finding it too easy or difficult. Thank you for a very enjoyable two days. Yours sincerely Mr D Shears Lead Inspector



5 March 2008

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Yours sincerely

Mr D Shears
Lead Inspector