

Cranborne Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113797
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311379
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Bright
Headteacher	Pippa Rossiter
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Water Street Cranborne Wimborne BH21 5QB
Telephone number	01725 517439
Fax number	01725 517439

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: steps taken to improve the rate of progress in mathematics for pupils in Years 3 and 4; opportunities for pupils throughout the school to write independently for a range of purposes; and the ways in which the school's self-evaluation systems are being strengthened. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work and a range of documentation. Discussions with pupils, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. 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, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small first school serving a widespread rural area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, but varies considerably in different year groups.

The headteacher was appointed in January 2007. There have been several changes in staffing over the past year and there are still some temporary arrangements in place. A new assistant headteacher is due to take up post in September.

The school holds Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. It works with other local schools as part of a 'small schools' cluster and through an area partnership.

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. Individual pupils thrive as a result of the very high standard of pastoral care provided by all staff. Parents are particularly positive about this aspect of the school's work, making comments such as 'I have two completely different children and the way the school meets their needs is fantastic' and 'the teachers treat each child on an individual basis catering for strengths and weaknesses'. Relationships between staff and pupils and pupils themselves are excellent. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and the range of activities in which they get involved.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year and almost all are working above expected levels by the end of the year. This good base is built on successfully in Years 1 and 2, where progress is good. As a result, standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are well above national averages. In Years 3 and 4, progress in recent years, whilst satisfactory, has not been sustained at the same rate seen lower down the school. As a result, while standards at the end of Year 4 have been above average overall, pupils' performance has been stronger in some subjects than others. English, particularly reading has been stronger than mathematics. Changes in teaching arrangements and more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress are leading to improvements. Current Year 4 pupils are making up lost ground and are on course to achieve higher standards in both English and mathematics than those seen over the past two years.

On taking up post, the headteacher quickly identified where there was scope to improve provision further and has worked with staff to implement a range of initiatives to build on the school's successes. A review of the mathematics curriculum identified that the scheme in use was not fully meeting pupils' needs. Planning and assessment arrangements for this subject have been adapted to ensure greater consistency across the school and to boost pupils' confidence in tackling problems. This is leading to improvement in achievement, particularly for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The headteacher also identified that, while pupils' written work is often of a high standard, there were not enough opportunities for them to write for a range of purposes. There are initial improvements in this area, with instances of high quality written work, for example, in history as part of a study on the Victorians. However, opportunities for pupils to write independently and to make decisions about how they will organise and present information and ideas across a range of subjects are still limited.

Lessons are well organised and pupils benefit from focused and purposeful teaching. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate key ideas and to give pupils a view of how to tackle the work that they are given. Pupils themselves are very responsive in lessons and keen to learn. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to engage them actively in the introductory parts of lessons, for example, by sharing ideas and comparing methods of working. Pupils enjoy opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups but they themselves would like to be able to do this more frequently and to make more choices about how they organise their learning.

Academic guidance has been strengthened through adaptations to the way pupils' progress is assessed. This enables the school to track and regularly review how individuals are doing. Additional support and specific programmes are introduced to help pupils who are not making the gains that they should. These interventions are proving successful in boosting progress where necessary. Good attention is paid to meeting the needs of pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they also make good progress in relation to their starting

points. Targets are being set for pupils to help them to understand what they need to work on next. However, at times, too many targets are set and pupils themselves are not involved in deciding on what they should be working on next. Marking rarely refers to targets, so pupils are not as clear as they could be about how they are doing.

Pupils benefit from a very good range of opportunities to participate in clubs and special events. Sport has a high status and pupils have good access to specialist coaching and competitive activities, with several organised through the area schools partnership. They know the importance of regular exercise 'to keep you fit' and of eating a healthy diet, although this is not always put into practice in their choice of snacks at break time. Pupils show excellent awareness of safe practices, for example, in the way that they use the limited playground space. Older pupils are proud of the range of responsibilities that they undertake. The school council gives pupils good opportunities to participate in decision-making, with members being involved in the recent appointment of an assistant headteacher. However, pupils are not quite clear of the process for putting forward their ideas or getting feedback on what the council discusses. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community through participation in events such as local fetes and church celebrations. Their understanding of the wider world is enhanced well through links with a village in India.

Although disruptions to staffing have slowed planned developments to some extent over the past year, the headteacher and governors have worked hard to minimise the impact on pupils' learning. The school has moved on under new leadership and recent initiatives to improve provision, particularly in Years 3 and 4, are having a good impact. Systems for self-evaluation have been strengthened through initiatives led by the headteacher. There are plans to expand these further by involving new leaders at different levels as they get to grips with their roles and responsibilities. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children start school with skills that are at least in line with expectations and in some instances with a good base for later learning. Whatever their starting points, children make good progress in all areas of learning. They are secure and confident in school, showing good awareness of class routines and forming good relationships with staff and with each other. They learn to share, cooperate and take turns, and generally show a good level of interest in the activities on offer. Many work with sustained concentration on the tasks that they are given. Careful track is kept of their progress and planning is adjusted to improve provision where there is a need to extend skills. This year, for example, a new approach to teaching sounds and letters is giving children confidence in trying to 'sound out' words for themselves. Children's skills in writing are developing well but opportunities are missed to encourage them to write independently for a range of purposes. Activities are carefully planned to give children a broad range of experiences and they benefit from a good level of adult support. However, the activities tend to be directed by adults and there is limited opportunity for children to make choices about what they will do or how they will organise a task.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes in subjects across the curriculum.
- Develop strategies to involve pupils more in introductory parts of lessons and in making decisions about how they will organise their work.

- Refine the system for setting targets so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve and how they are doing in relation to their targets.

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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	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	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	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

25 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Cranborne First School, Cranborne, BH21 5QB

You may remember that I visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all those of you who explained what you were doing in lessons and what was happening around the school. Particular thanks to the Years 3 and 4 pupils who gave me so much helpful information when we met. I thought you would be interested in what I am saying in my report. The most important thing to say is that yours is a good school.

You get off to a good start in the Reception Year and learn lots of new things very quickly in this year group and in Years 1 and 2. This means that you are doing very well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The school has noticed that those of you in Years 3 and 4 could be making faster progress, particularly in mathematics, and has changed the way that you are taught to help with this. You told me that you like the way the teaching groups are organised now.

The school takes very good care of you and makes sure that you understand how to keep safe and healthy – but I noticed that not everyone has a healthy snack at break time! Your behaviour is excellent and I was impressed with the way that you have thought about rules for the playground so that everybody can make best use of the space. You are keen to learn, thoroughly enjoy school and are lucky to take part in so many sports and activities.

You can help with the things that I have suggested the school needs to work on now.

- Give you more opportunities to use your good skills in writing to explain your ideas and findings in all the subjects that you are taught.
- Get you thinking from the start of each lesson so that you all work out answers to questions, share your ideas and think about how you are going to organise your work.
- Make sure that you are clear about your targets and give you some information about how well you are doing in reaching a target when your work is marked. Thank you again for your help and I hope you enjoyed the visit to the bluebell woods!

With best wishes

Shirley Billington Lead inspector

Annex B



25 April 2008

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Thank you again for your help and I hope you enjoyed the visit to the bluebell woods!

With best wishes

Shirley Billington
Lead inspector