

Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113799
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311381
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	88
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	10
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Oldfield
Headteacher	Ian Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Summer Lane Evershot Dorchester DT2 0JP
Telephone number	01935 83287

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	15 October 2008
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Fax number

01935 83287

Age group 4-11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the impact of actions being taken to raise standards in writing

the effectiveness of strategies to raise the challenge for more able pupils

the impact of the school's endeavours to achieve the UNICEF 'Rights Respecting School' status on the pupils' personal development.

Evidence was gathered from an examination of the school's documentation, parents' questionnaires, pupils' work, observations of pupils in classes, around the school and in the playground, as well as interviews with the deputy headteacher and other staff, pupils, governors and parents.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Children attend the school from the local area and surrounding villages. Many pupils attend from further afield and come to school by bus or taxi each day. The school holds the Activemark and is working towards achieving Healthy School status and the UNICEF 'Rights Respecting School' status. It holds the Basic Skills Mark. Provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is made in the Reception class.

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 fully reflects its Christian ethos and provides a good education for all of its pupils. In the last few years, it has undergone several staffing changes. Although there was a slight fall in standards initially, these have swiftly risen again because of the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher. He has worked very closely with the deputy headteacher and governors to ensure that any disruption was short lived. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many echo the sentiments of one who wrote, 'The school has progressed strongly in the last couple of years. There is always a lovely atmosphere in this friendly and caring school.'

The pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. When asked, they could not think of anything they would like to change. Behaviour is excellent and the playground is a happy and friendly place to be. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the school's efforts to attain 'Rights Respecting School' status. They know what each class charter contains and try very hard to live up to its demands. They have a very mature understanding of their responsibility to the global, as well as local, community. The school council is very active and aware of its role in bringing pupils' views to the notice of the school management as well as organising a range of fund-raising events. They are very aware of contemporary environmental concerns. Their very good numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills provide an outstanding preparation for their future life. Pupils understand how to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of what leading a healthy lifestyle entails. The 'healthy house' competition, where pupils gain points for the healthy components of their lunch boxes, helps promote healthy eating very successfully.

Children in the Reception class (Early Years Foundation Stage) receive a good start to their education. A wide range of learning opportunities is provided both indoors and outside, enabling them to make good progress in all areas of learning. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 continue to make good progress and achieve well. They attain standards that are above the national averages because they are interested and excited by what is taught. Although standards in mathematics, science and reading are well above average, those in writing are not as high, and the school has rightly identified this as being an area of comparative weakness. Although nearly all pupils attain the national average, not enough more able pupils achieve the higher levels. This is partly because these pupils' understanding and use of some of the more complex skills of grammar, punctuation and sentence construction are not totally secure. The school has recently adapted its curriculum in order to provide more relevant and exciting opportunities for writing across a wide range of subjects. For example, a lesson in the lower junior class, with the teacher employing the use of costume and props, motivated and inspired the pupils to create an imaginary situation of their own. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these strategies on pupils' achievement.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. The eager responses and excitement generated in each classroom show how much pleasure pupils take in their learning. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn. They use resources, such as interactive whiteboards, skilfully. Teachers are particularly successful at planning a wide range of tasks in order to meet the needs of all pupils in these mixed age group classes. These are carefully devised to meet the learning needs of all pupils so that all are appropriately challenged or supported. Pupils say that although marking is helpful and gives useful advice as to how they can improve further, teachers use a variety of systems and all mark in different ways. Some

pupils find this confusing and say it would be more helpful to have the same system throughout the school. As one said 'It's a big shock when you suddenly have to learn a completely new system.'

Pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers carefully monitor the progress of the pupils in their classes and pupils are involved in setting their own targets. They strive hard to achieve these. Pupils who are especially gifted or talented are identified at an early stage and their progress is regularly reviewed. Care is taken to make certain they are sufficiently challenged, both in and out of the classroom. To this end, they attend activities provided within the school's local group of schools, as well as other settings. They participate in the 'Robotics Challenge' and attend problem-solving days, and the school has introduced a wide range of activities, particularly in mathematics and science. All these have a positive impact on their progress. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It ensures they receive good quality support both in the classroom and, where appropriate, in small groups.

Pupils are cared for extremely well. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are strong and secure. Parents, in particular, appreciate the positive impact this attention to pupils' welfare has on their children's learning. 'The children are taught in a compassionate and caring environment which gives them a feeling of security and allows them to "aim high" in their achievement.' The headteacher, staff and governors know how well the school is doing and what needs to be improved. They have set high but realistic targets for the future. Their self-evaluation is accurate, although a little cautious in places, particularly in identifying the quality of care and guidance and pupils' personal development. The successful action taken to reverse the slight decline in standards shows a clear understanding of the school's ability to take decisive and successful action and indicates a good capacity to improve further. As one parent said, 'It's a lovely school with caring staff and a great all round education.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with a wide range of learning experiences, although these are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress and they join Year 1 having reached above average standards in nearly all the areas of learning. Communication, language and literacy skills are slightly weaker and there is good attention paid to promoting these, with lots of activities to enthuse and motivate all the children, particularly boys. The 'space' topic provides many opportunities for role-play, drama and writing instructions, which all serve to improve children's communication skills. Children learn effectively because a wide range of activities is provided for them across all areas of the curriculum, both indoors and outside. There is a good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. Tasks are carefully matched to children's individual needs and there are plenty of opportunities for them to question and explore on their own. Monitoring of children's progress is good and action is taken to provide additional support where it is needed. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The children have happily settled into school because of the good induction process to prepare them for when they join the class. Parents appreciate this and the approachability of staff and their willingness to sort out any day-to-day problems. However, a few parents have found that communication is not always as good as it could be when there are specific issues. The school has taken steps to ensure that parents are informed more promptly on the few occasions when these concerns may arise.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that the more able pupils are given additional help to develop the more complex skills of grammar, punctuation and sentence construction to enable a greater proportion to achieve the higher levels in writing.
- Develop a system of marking pupils' work that is consistent across the school.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

16 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sticklands CE (VA) Primary School, Dorset DT2 0JP

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You all seemed to be very happy and it was good to hear how you really enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We were particularly impressed with your commitment to gaining the 'Rights Respecting School' status. Your school gives you a good education, and works hard to make it even better.

These are the things we felt were particularly good:

- Your behaviour is excellent and you are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning.
- You are all doing well in your learning, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily and taking physical exercise.
- Teachers make learning interesting and fun for you, and you all know your targets and what you need to do to improve.
- You have an interesting and varied curriculum and you all seem to appreciate the excellent variety of extra opportunities that have been provided for you.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher leads the school really well and all the staff are very keen to make it even better.

There are two things that could be even better:

- We think that those of you who do well could be given more help to develop the more complicated skills in punctuation, grammar and sentence construction to improve your writing further.
- You told us that you would find it more helpful if all teachers were to mark your work in a similar way, so you do not have to learn a new system for each teacher. We agree with you.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard to ensure that it stays as successful as it is now.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Christine Huard Lead Inspector