

Parrett and Axe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113807
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311384
Inspection date	26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Townsend HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lindsay Williamson
Headteacher	Nigel Evans
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Fairoak Way Mosterton Beaminster DT8 3HJ
Telephone number	01308 868492
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

The HMI evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated achievement and standards, the personal development and well-being of pupils, the quality of provision, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from analysis of school data, the school's self-evaluation, the previous inspection report, pupils' work, parent questionnaires, school policies, monitoring reports and other documents. Lessons were observed and discussions were held with pupils, senior staff, governors and teaching assistants. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Parrett and Axe CE VA Primary School is a small primary school that serves Mosterton and surrounding villages. The vast majority of its pupils are from White British backgrounds. Pupils currently enter the school with average to above average levels of attainment, although, given the small size of year groups, this can vary. Around a third of the school's population has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above the national average. These pupils include those with specific learning needs, including dyslexia, pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties, and some with behavioural, social and emotional needs. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 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

Parrett and Axe CE VA Primary School is a good school. It has some exemplary features. Of the many parents who returned questionnaires, almost all highlighted the school's happy ethos and positive learning environment. A parent wrote 'The school and everyone within it are an extended family.' The school forges excellent links with all its key partners including parents, external agencies and the local community.

Standards and achievement are good. From their varying starting points, pupils make good progress through the school. Children make a good start to their learning in the Reception class and continue to do so in Years 1 and 2. Although results are likely to be lower than last year, standards remain above average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, although few pupils reach the higher levels in numeracy. Most pupils reach the challenging targets set for them.

Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school. Standards in Year 6 are also likely to be lower this year and are in line with national averages.. This small group, including a sizeable proportion of pupils with additional learning difficulties, have made good progress and most pupils are likely to hit the challenging targets set for them in English and mathematics. Science results were too low last year and, currently, progress in science remains satisfactory. Improvements to the science curriculum and monitoring of pupils' progress are in hand but it is too soon to see the full impact of these on pupils' achievements.

Pupils with additional learning difficulties make at least good progress. Their needs are identified early and, through a range of tailored approaches, the school 'goes the extra mile' to ensure they receive the specialist support they need to achieve. For example, effective programmes led by specially trained staff are in place for pupils who require support with their reading, coordination skills and those with speech and language difficulties.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attendance is above average. Pupils show respect and concern for each other's well-being. They develop good levels of cultural awareness and spirituality through daily assemblies and the curriculum. Pupils behave well around the school, have good relationships with each other and generally show positive attitudes in lessons. They predominantly feel safe around the school. All pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and recognise the beneficial effects of a balanced diet and exercise. Pupils' enjoyment of daily school life is outstanding. In fact, several pupils were not able to think of anything about the school that they wanted to change. Parents are quick to endorse this and recognise, in particular, the part played by the school in raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils make a very strong contribution to the school and community. The school council has helped to provide adventure playground equipment and more recently a 'buddy bench'. Other pupils act as playground friends and help to keep an eye out for younger pupils. They have a good regard for environmental issues, storing rainwater for their garden and designing shopping bags to reduce the use of plastic. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good, and along with the standards reached in literacy and numeracy, pupils are well prepared for their future adult life.

Pupils make consistently good progress in lessons because teaching is good. Classroom relationships are very positive and the work teachers set is well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers are confident in their delivery of subjects and teaching assistants are especially

effective in supporting pupils with additional learning difficulties. Behaviour in class is good, especially as the school works very effectively in supporting those pupils with specific needs in this area. Attitudes to learning are positive and pupils very much enjoy the practical activities they are set. Teachers use assessments well to guide their planning. Work in pupils' books is regularly checked. However, this marking does not always give pupils sufficient advice on how well they are meeting their individual learning targets. Teachers help students to assess their own progress in lessons but this is not consistent in all classes.

The curriculum on offer is broad and balanced. Pupils receive a good grounding in basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. There are good links between subjects. For example, the history of Tudor monarchs was taught in French through a modern foreign languages lesson. The curriculum enables pupils to make a strong contribution to the local community and increasingly to develop an understanding of global issues. The school provides an exemplary range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment visits and opportunities, for which the take up by pupils is high. This contributes much to their enjoyment of school. The school is aware that planning for science is weak and is working to improve coverage of the science programme of study and increase the amount of enquiry work on offer.

Parents are very pleased with the way the school offers outstanding care, guidance and support. Staff have a high level of commitment to maintaining pupils' health and safety and ensuring excellent pastoral care. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust. There are exemplary systems in place to identify early learners at risk, afford them well targeted, specialist support and to monitor their progress. Partnerships with parents are strong and the school is welcoming and open. Information evenings for parents on the use of phonics in early reading are popular and give a good understanding on how best to support their children. Teachers regularly lead progress reviews with pupils and their parents and give good oral advice on how individual pupils might improve their work. Consequently, many more pupils are now meeting the challenging targets that are now being set for them.

The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the school. He has been instrumental in making the caring environment within the school and its commitment to every child's well-being a reality. Capable senior teachers provide effective support and help secure improvements to provision in English, mathematics and for pupils with additional learning difficulties. Leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and its self-evaluation draws upon accurate assessments of teaching and learning. The school tracks the progress individual pupils are making towards their targets very carefully. However, leaders recognise that, in science especially, the analysis of the rates of progress for year groups and groups of learners has to date been insufficiently searching. Governance is effective. The governing body is closely involved in the school's strategic direction and acts decisively as a critical friend.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle well into the Reception class. Planning demonstrates that there is a good range of provision across the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. A good balance of adult-planned and child-initiated play-based activities is on offer. The teaching team carefully assesses children's progress and so there is a close match between their needs and the learning planned for them. The teaching of reading is particularly effective. Children's ability levels are generally above average when they join the school and teaching builds effectively on these to ensure they make a good start in their first year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science through improvements to the subject curriculum and closer analysis of the rates of progress in each class.
- Ensure marking in books gives pupils clear advice on how well they are doing and what they need to do to move forward in their learning.

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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 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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	1

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parrett and Axe CE VA Primary School, Beaminster, DT8 3HJ

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. It was a delight to talk with you. You will be pleased to hear that we think Parrett and Axe CE VA Primary is a good school and that you are making good progress in your lessons. Here are a number of things we like about your school.

- You get a good start to school life in the Reception class.
- You make good progress in your reading, writing and mathematics.
- The staff at the school take exceptionally good care of you all.
- You very much enjoy school life, including the interesting lessons and wide range of sports and arts activities and educational visits and events.
- You behave well, know how to keep healthy and safe, and make an excellent contribution to school life through your school council, involvement in special projects and consideration for others.

The challenge now is to achieve even higher standards in your work. We have asked the school, with your help, to:

- raise achievement in science
- give you all clear advice in your books on how well you are doing and what you need to do to move forward in your learning.

Yours sincerely

David Townsend

Her Majesty's Inspector