

Powerstock Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113812
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311385
Inspection date	26 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Bunney
Headteacher	Claire Briden
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2003
School address	Powerstock Bridport DT6 3TB
Telephone number	01308 485380
Fax number	01308 485523

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Powerstock is much smaller than most primary schools. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. The number of pupils on roll has risen markedly in the past two years and the proportion of pupils joining the school other than at the usual time is high. Children join Reception with attainment that is at the expected levels. However, the large majority of pupils who join in other year groups have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and below average attainment. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Since the previous inspection, there has been almost a complete change of teaching staff. The headteacher took up post two years ago after a period of significant staffing turbulence. The school has won the 'Healthy School' and 'Active Mark' awards this year.

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 and improving school. It has come a long way in the last two years under the very strong leadership of the headteacher. Standards are improving and the key to this is the way school leaders, staff and governors work closely together, intent on raising standards further and making the school even better. The school has a secure knowledge of its strengths and clear plans to tackle weaker areas. Pupils' excellent personal development and behaviour stem from the high quality care and support they are given. Relationships are exceptionally good at all levels. Parents are delighted with the family atmosphere and how the school is improving. As one parent said, 'I couldn't be any happier with the education and care my children are receiving at Powerstock.'

Pupils achieve well. This has not always been the case. Evidence from school data indicates that many of the older pupils did not always perform as well as they should have in the past and are now in the process of catching up. The small year groups and high mobility means that there can be significant year-on-year variation in standards. However, the school ensures that pupils do well in relation to their starting points. Children settle well in Reception and make good progress. This is built on well in Key Stages 1 and 2. By Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in reading, writing and science and most reach the nationally expected standards by the time they leave. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress in mathematics is not always as quick as that in English and science, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has begun to improve its mathematics provision.

Good teaching is supported by a stimulating and broad curriculum that really sparks pupils' enjoyment in learning. Lessons are well planned and pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve. However, in mathematics, activities are occasionally too hard for those pupils who find learning difficult, or are too easy for the higher-attaining pupils.

The headteacher has been successful in creating an environment where pupils enjoy school, feel safe and want to do well. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development reflects the school's strong Christian ethos. Partnerships with other schools, the church and outside agencies are excellent and successfully enhance pupils' well-being.

The headteacher has built a strong team who share her vision. The school has good systems for checking how well it is doing. Assessment has recently been improved and is rigorous. Close monitoring of pupils' progress has led to a sharper focus on making sure all pupils learn well. Subject leaders' roles are developing well, although they have insufficient opportunities to observe their colleagues teaching in order to give guidance on improvement. Governors play a key part in challenging and supporting the school and are well led by a knowledgeable and dedicated chair.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school has recently changed its provision in Reception and children are now taught in a single-age class. Rising numbers on entry to Reception have enabled this to happen. This has improved the curriculum and is ensuring that there are plenty of practical activities and good opportunities to learn through working together in small groups. Children are given a good balance of learning through purposeful play activities and adult-led sessions. They make good

progress in literacy and numeracy and across the other areas of learning. By the time children begin Year 1, most have reached the expected levels, and a number exceed them. There are excellent induction procedures for helping children when they join the school. Parents really appreciate the close links that are encouraged between home and school. Children are carefully nurtured and parents are delighted with how quickly they settle and that they are kept safe. The quality of teaching is good. Assessment systems are good and children's progress is carefully checked. Work is mainly matched accurately to children's needs, although very occasionally, capable children could be challenged more.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is as good in mathematics as that in English and science by making sure the needs of higher-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are always met in every lesson.
- Increase opportunities for subject leaders to check the quality of teaching and learning across the school so they can have a greater impact on raising achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school, and for the majority this represents good progress in relation to where they started.

By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, and average in writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress is good overall in Key Stage 1 and excellent in reading. This reflects the impact of the school's hard work in improving reading provision and assessment. Since 2005, there has been an upward trend in standards at the end of Year 2. This is giving pupils a better start on entry to Year 3.

Progress in Key Stage 2 is good. Pupils are catching up well from their past underachievement. However, whilst progress is good in reading, writing and science, it is only satisfactory in mathematics. Good progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in reading, writing and science is leading to nearly all reaching at least the nationally expected standards by Year 6. However, progress in mathematics is only satisfactory for these pupils. Consequently, fewer reach the standards expected than do so in English and science. Higher-attaining pupils achieve well overall, although their progress is occasionally slower in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love going to school and are eager to learn. This is reflected in their good attendance. Their behaviour is exemplary in and around the school. Throughout the school, pupils show kindness and respect for each other regardless of age and ability. They accept each other's differences and talents and give a warm welcome to newcomers and visitors. They develop a good understanding of other faiths and cultures, and a close link with a school in Ghana really enhances this. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to keep healthy and come to love physical activity because of the school's strong emphasis on sport. They greatly enjoy the whole-school 'Wake and Shake' activity at the start of the day. Pupils feel very safe and free from bullying and prejudice. They make a strong contribution to the life of the school and local community and raise funds for international charities. Pupils are well prepared for their next

school because they make good progress in developing their basic skills and work well independently and in teams.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and ensures pupils make good progress. All teachers know each pupil very well and relationships are excellent. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and behave well. Teachers make sure pupils understand what they are expected to learn and provide good feedback so pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers and classroom assistants use good questioning techniques which promote pupils' thinking. Teachers pay good attention to the age span in each class and usually match work well to the very wide range of pupils' attainment. On the occasions when this is not the case, some pupils do not make enough progress. Assessment and marking are used effectively to set targets for pupils and to plan for the needs of different ability groups. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, including those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for the youngest children is well organised with lively learning opportunities. In Years 1 to 6 there is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in the context of a broad and interesting curriculum. Links are made between subjects to enhance learning. Writing skills, for example, are particularly well developed through science. There are effective programmes for helping pupils to catch up and these are helping to promote particularly good progress in English, including in spelling. Extra-curricular activities are excellent. The art curriculum is particularly strong and information and communication technology (ICT) provision is much better than when the school was last inspected. Specialist teachers in sport and French enhance the provision effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. The exceptional care and support provided for all pupils starts from the first contact between pupils, parents and the school. Parents particularly value the warm, caring and friendly environment and the way all staff make sure the pupils feel secure and happy. The school supports later entrants very well, helping them to settle quickly, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Child protection and health and safety procedures are rigorous. Very thorough systems for academic guidance have been implemented in the last two years. Assessments are analysed in detail and used to improve progress, and this process is already proving to be most effective in literacy and science. Individual target setting is now well established and pupils know what they need to do to improve in English and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good leadership. Her enthusiasm, vision, commitment and management skills are central to the improvements being made. This is recognised by staff, governors, pupils and parents. She has gathered, motivated and developed a team which shares her vision and commitment. She successfully manages her time in both headship and as part-time class teacher. The arrangements for self-evaluation are good. The headteacher, subject leaders and teachers systematically evaluate assessment information in order to make improvements to provision and progress. The headteacher also rigorously monitors teaching and learning. However, the school is fully aware of the need to now step up opportunities for subject leaders to observe their colleagues teaching in order to give more guidance.

Governors play a key part in this improving school. The well-informed chair of governors keeps a watchful eye on the school's progress, and governors and the headteacher have worked in close partnership to manage and eradicate a large deficit budget. This has now been redressed with rising pupil numbers, financial help from the local authority and prudent spending. The good rate of improvement since the headteacher's arrival shows the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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
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	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

26 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Powerstock Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Powerstock, Dorset DT6 3TB

I am writing to say thank you for making me so welcome and for talking to me when I came to visit your school recently. This helped me to get to know your school in a short time. I now want to tell you what I found out about your school.

Firstly, you need to know that you go to a good school where you make good progress. Here are some are some other strengths of your school:

- Your headteacher leads the school very well and your teachers and governors are working hard to make it even better.
- You make good progress in English and science.
- You really enjoy school and get on very well with each other.
- You are a credit to your school and behave extremely well.
- Teaching is good and your lessons are interesting.
- You have some really good opportunities for art, clubs and sport.
- Teachers and other staff take superb care of you and make sure you are kept safe. This is what I am asking the school to improve:
 - Make sure more of you reach the required standards in mathematics by Year 6 so you do as well in mathematics as you do in English.
 - Make sure your work is never too hard or too easy.
 - Help teachers in charge of subjects to be more involved in checking up on how well you are learning.

I hope you will continue to work hard at using your targets to improve your work. Thank you once again for all your help.

Best wishes

Eileen Chadwick

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