

# Shillingstone Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113813
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	311386
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Shirley Billington

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	110
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kerry Pitt-Kerby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brian South
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Knapps Blandford Forum DT11 0RA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01258 860446
<b>Fax number</b>	01258 860446

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress of pupils through the school, the use of assessment data to improve pupils' achievement, the school's systems for checking the quality of its work and the impact of action taken to address any weaknesses. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but were sampled in order to arrive at the judgements given in this report. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' attainment, observations in lessons, discussions with pupils, meetings with the headteacher, other staff and the chair of governors, a meeting with the school council and scrutiny of school documentation. The views of parents were gathered from the returns of the Ofsted questionnaire.

## Description of the school

This is a small primary school with four classes. Reception children are taught as a separate small class. The other classes each have pupils from two year groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, but varies considerably in different year groups. Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations. There have been several staff changes over the past two years and there are still some temporary arrangements in place. The school is currently located on a cramped site adjacent to a busy road. A new site has been secured, but funding for building a new school has not yet been made available.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a sound education for its pupils. It has been through a difficult period, partly resulting from several staff changes, during which pupils in Years 3 to 6 did not achieve as well as they should have done. This was not picked up as quickly as it could have been but effective steps have now been taken to keep closer track of pupils' progress. Over the past year, the school has put in place tighter assessment systems to check how individual pupils are doing in each year group. This information is being used effectively to identify those who are not doing as well as they should and to target extra support where necessary. Although there is some variation in different areas, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Standards are broadly average, but vary from year to year, usually depending on the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in a particular cohort. Pupils are generally doing well in reading but writing is a weaker area, particularly for boys. Initiatives to improve mathematical skills, following the identification of some underachievement in this subject, are proving effective. This is particularly evident in the focus on improving skills in calculation, which has improved pupils' confidence and is leading to a more consistent rate of progress.

Until recently there were weaknesses in teaching that resulted in pupils making limited progress in Years 3 and 4, particularly in writing and mathematics. Although pupils made up lost ground in Years 5 and 6, there was still an element of underachievement that particularly affected average and lower attainers. These weaknesses have now been resolved and teaching across the school is satisfactory. It is being further strengthened by better use of the assessment information now available so that planning takes account of a range of learning needs.

The curriculum is being adapted to further boost pupils' achievement. Adjustments have been made, for example, to the way that writing is being taught and pupils' skills are assessed. Pupils are given clear guidance on the key characteristics of a particular piece of written work. They are encouraged to evaluate whether they have included all the necessary elements when the work is completed. Individual targets in writing help them to know what to do to improve. However, there are still weaknesses in this area, with a noticeable gap between the attainment of boys and girls. A small number of pupils with weak reading skills are participating in a structured programme, which makes good use of information and communication technology (ICT), to address their needs. Early indications are of improvements within a short time for several participants, although it is too soon to see the overall impact of this initiative.

Pupils are well known and well cared for on an individual basis. Parents are particularly positive about this aspect of the school's work, making comments such as 'My child has gone from strength to strength' and 'Our two children, who are very different in terms of need and personality, are both thriving.' Good pastoral care and a good range of opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom ensure pupils' good personal development. Children in the Reception Year develop confidence as learners. This is successfully built on, with the school placing a strong emphasis on boosting pupils' self-esteem through praise and rewards for effort and success. The oldest pupils are mature and sensible and able to work well together. They enjoy the opportunity to take on responsibilities such as acting as peer mediators if there is a playground dispute and are clear about the need for confidentiality in any issues discussed. The school council makes a good contribution to decision making, taking the initiative in organising fund raising efforts and planning for improvements, for example, in agreeing fair rules for the use of the playground. Pupils enjoy school, as is evident in their good attendance.

They know the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, understanding, for example, why they can only have fruit or vegetables at break time.

A major concern for staff, parents and governors is the inadequate accommodation. This has a significant impact on the quality of the curriculum and affects a range of subjects. The school makes every effort to compensate and as a result ensures that the curriculum is satisfactory. It achieves this, for example, by regularly using sports and performance facilities at a nearby independent school. A range of imaginative approaches is used to extend opportunities for learning. An annual arts week introduces pupils to new techniques and results in some striking work, using a variety of media. The oldest pupils participate in workshops at the local secondary school to extend their experience of subjects such as music and modern foreign languages. Use is made of a mobile suite of laptops to teach ICT in classrooms. Nevertheless, opportunities for pupils to carry out independent research are inhibited by lack of a library and easy ICT access. Play space is very limited and this occasionally leads to some boisterous behaviour at break times, although generally pupils are very considerate of each other. For children in the Reception Year, the lack of a designated outdoor play area restricts provision for creative and physical development. Governors are in consultation with the local authority and the diocese to secure the funding for a new building.

While good use is being made of the information on pupils' attainment to analyse how well individuals are doing, the data is not used enough to check on the effectiveness of the school overall. So, for example, assessment data is not summarised to identify how different groups of pupils are doing. Because of this the school does not have a clear picture of whether, for example, boys and girls are achieving equally well. Other strategies to check on the school's effectiveness also lack a degree of rigour. Lessons are observed and feedback given to individual teachers, but the observations are not collated to give an overview of the quality of teaching and to identify potential areas for improvement. Subject managers play a limited role in evaluating the areas for which they are responsible and there is no clear system to check on the impact of initiatives to bring about improvements. As a result, the school does not have a sufficiently objective view of what is working well and what needs to be improved. Evaluations of the quality of its work tend to be over generous.

Despite the lack of precision in checking on its effectiveness, the headteacher and staff have effectively identified where there is scope for improvement and are taking appropriate steps to strengthen provision where necessary. The impact of recent initiatives, particularly in improving achievement in mathematics and setting up systems to check on pupils' progress and taking immediate action where there are concerns, demonstrate that it has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children in this small class have the benefit of a very good adult-child ratio. This ensures a secure and successful start to school life. Children make good progress in many areas of learning and the majority reach at least expected levels at the start of Year 1, with a significant proportion exceeding these. Children's personal and social skills and early understanding of number are particularly good. Writing is a weaker area. Children's progress is carefully tracked and regularly recorded. However, as in the rest of the school, the information on their attainment is not summarised and analysed to identify how effectively the curriculum is meeting their needs or to check whether boys and girls are doing equally well. The classroom is well organised to provide a range of interesting experiences and there is an appropriate balance between adult-led

and independent activities. Lack of an adjacent play area means that there are limitations in curriculum provision, resulting in too few opportunities for children to plan and initiate large scale activities.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement in writing, ensuring that boys do as well as girls in this area.
- Summarise and analyse assessment information to check on how well different groups of pupils are doing and to check on the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- Strengthen the strategies for checking on the school's strengths and weaknesses and for evaluating the impact of planned initiatives in relation to improving pupils' achievement.

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 the next section 5 inspection.



## 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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3

### 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	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	2

### 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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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**

21 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Shillingstone Church of England Primary School, Blandford DT11 0RA

Some of you might remember that I visited recently to see how you are getting on at school. I would like to thank all of you who talked to me about what you were doing in lessons and at break time. Special thanks to the members of the school council who explained how they represent the views of their classes and make suggestions about organising fund raising efforts and making the best use of the playground.

I thought you might be interested in what I am saying in my report. Your school provides you with a sound education. A lot of work has gone on recently to tighten up on the way that it does many things and this is helping to improve how you learn. The school has got much better at tracking how well you are doing in each year group to check that you are learning as much as you should.

One of the best things about your school is you yourselves! I was very impressed with how well you behave and think about others, particularly in the small playground and moving around the awkward school site. Those of you in Year 6 understand how important it is to set a good example for younger children and you are good ambassadors for your school. Several of you told me how much you enjoy your lessons and special events like arts week.

- I have suggested three things that the school needs to do now, can you think of ways to help them?
- Make sure that you do as well in writing as you do in reading, and help boys to do as well as girls with their written work.
- Use all that information about how each of you is doing individually to check how different groups are doing and to make sure that what is taught meets everybody's needs.
- Make more regular checks on teaching and learning and also check whether new ways of working are making a difference to how well you learn.

Thank you again for your help.

With best wishes

Shirley Billington Lead inspector