

Wool Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113822
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311388
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Matthews
Headteacher	Lesley C Craze
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	High Street Wool Wareham BH20 6BT
Telephone number	01929 462569
Fax number	01929 463202

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues. • How effectively the school is improving standards and achievement in mathematics. • Whether the pace of learning in Reception is maintained across Years 1 and 2. • The effectiveness of teachers' written marking and guidance for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and whether this helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. The inspector collected evidence from discussions with pupils, staff and governors, from a range of school documents and from looking at pupils' work in books. In addition, evidence from observation of pupils in lessons and at play was gathered. Parents' views were sought from questionnaires completed before the inspection and first hand at the start of the school day. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in depth, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations of these are not justified. Where appropriate, these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small rural school, where intake numbers vary considerably year by year. Pupils enter the Reception class in September and move into middle schools at the end of Year 4. The socio-economic profile of the locality is mixed but relatively disadvantaged. School rolls are falling in the area and a higher than usual proportion of pupils leave the school each year, with fewer joining. Over a third of pupils come from outside the catchment area. The school recently gained Active School, Sports Mark and Healthy School awards. There are four classes, including a mixed Years 3 and 4 group.

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, with many outstanding features. Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry are usually below those found nationally, but they settle quickly and happily into the Reception class and make excellent progress. Pupils achieve well by Year 4 and standards exceed expectations for nine-year-olds, with notable strengths in English. Pupils' enjoy their education enormously because teachers' well planned lessons and activities spark their academic interests and lead to excellent personal development throughout the school. Parents greatly value the 'approachable' staff, a phrase they often use, and the friendly atmosphere in which their children learn.

By the time pupils leave Year 4, most parents agree with one who wrote, 'The school has provided them with an extremely well-rounded education that has formed a firm basis for the move to middle school.' Exceptional progress in the Reception class means that children quickly develop confidence, understanding and skills, so that by the time they enter Year 1, standards and personal development are much better than expected. This confirms parents' views that they 'couldn't have asked for a better start' for their children, who remain keen to come to school, enthusiastic, confident and sociable as they move through the years.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have been average over the past five years and the school recognises that more challenging targets will enable pupils to fulfil the high potential they show at the end of Reception. These were being re-set for Year 2 at the time of the inspection. Other measures to improve achievement are resulting in better progress for the current Years 1 and 2 classes, which are now taught in single year groups. Progress speeds up in Years 3 and 4 and targets for Year 4 are challenging but realistic because of the good progress pupils have made through their time at the school.

The school has identified that the high standards pupils achieve in English could be achieved in mathematics where standards are average. Measures taken to improve this are already resulting in better achievement. Successful training and advice, together with effective subject leadership have led to improved subject confidence amongst staff. Very well focused use of teaching assistants helps pupils of all abilities to learn better in mathematics as well as in other subjects. Teaching is good overall, with outstanding aspects, such as the teaching of phonics. Strong emphasis on speaking and listening skills, combined with good opportunities for pupils to express themselves through specialist drama lessons, have led to very good achievement in English, with excellent progress evident in some pupils' reading. Standards in writing are above average in all years, with evenly joined script, which creates neat, well presented work in all subjects.

An excellent curriculum, combined with outstanding care, support and guidance are essential ingredients in the school's success. Inspection confirmed a parent's comment about the 'warm and caring ethos' where pupils' safety and well-being are of central concern. The great majority of parents value the extra help children receive when required and the variety and quality of visits, visitors and 'interesting extra-curricular offers' as one described it, which enable pupils to 'meet their potential through "fun-learning"' in the words of another.

Pupils recognise and talk about the balance between rights and responsibilities which forms a key part of the 'Rights Respecting Schools' agenda, an award towards which the school is making good progress. They readily accept responsibilities, such as being School Councillors, Playground Friends or Lunchtime Play leaders, carrying out these duties seriously and sensibly.

Pupils work harmoniously in groups or pairs in a wide range of classroom and other situations. These strengths contribute very effectively towards excellent development of skills to prepare them for future working life. Pupils from Year 2, for instance, were proud to show and describe their own and other groups' outdoor sculpture work which emulated the style of Andy Goldsworthy. This is an example of pupils' excellent development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding, linked as it was with discussion of ideas about recycling and the environment. Pupils were equally thrilled by demonstrating battery circuit experiments in science. Attendance and behaviour are excellent. Most pupils, even very young ones, understand their targets in English and mathematics and talk perceptively about when and how they have achieved them. However, marking for the oldest pupils does not give them sufficiently detailed guidance about how they can improve their work.

Good overall management includes outstanding leadership by the headteacher, senior staff and governors, which has led to significant improvement since the last report and demonstrates good capacity to improve further. Clear direction and identification of issues for improvement are already resulting in better achievement in mathematics and a more consistent pace in learning across the school. The headteacher's firm style, reinforced consistently by staff, sets high expectations which provide pupils with a clear view of 'what is expected of them' as one parent commented. Parents are pleased that they receive good information about pupils' progress and early warning about any emerging concerns. Evidence from inspection did not support the concerns of a small minority of parents regarding leadership. Academic targets for Year 4 are challenging, and tracking of pupils' progress is strong. Governors understand data well and offer high levels of challenge and support to the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

'My child looks forward to Mondays and leaves school each day excited by their experiences': this quote from a parent in the Reception class testifies to the excellent management and teaching in the Foundation Stage. This is based on a thorough understanding on the part of staff and governors of children's needs in these early years. As a result, children develop high levels of academic and personal skills to equip them outstandingly well for work in the main school and for other aspects of their lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set more challenging targets earlier in Year 1 to reflect the above average standards pupils have reached by the end of Reception.
- Improve the written marking of work for pupils in Years 3 and 4 to provide them with clear information about how to improve to meet 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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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?	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	1
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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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

12 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wool Church of England VA School, Wool BH20 6BT

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school in January. It was a pleasure being there and I really enjoyed my visits to your lessons, talking with some of you and looking at your work. I am writing to tell you what I found out.

Yours is a good school with some outstanding things happening there. For instance, you learn literacy very well indeed, so your writing is good from when you are very young. I was impressed with the Reception class's writing of sentences and the way you all do joined-up writing so early. This makes your books neat and well presented. I enjoyed the way you work together and talk together, which is really helping your learning, especially in literacy, but in other subjects too. I heard a lot about your drama lessons, which help you to express yourselves so well. All this helps you to become confident, mature young people by the time you leave the school. Those of you who have responsibilities such as Playground friends, take these duties seriously and others are pleased that you are there to help them if they need you.

Most of you have done really well in reading and many of you have made excellent progress, which helps you to find out interesting things from books and computers. Your progress in mathematics and numeracy is improving, but it is not quite as good as in literacy yet and staff are working hard to improve this. I was impressed by the good artwork around the school, for instance the sculptures Year 2 had done on the field. This all happens because teaching is good and your teachers and other staff take great care to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. They make sure you get an excellent range of subjects, clubs, visits, visitors and other activities that you find enjoyable and make you keen to come to school. Staff make sure you feel safe and happy in school and take very good care of you. I found your behaviour to be excellent and everyone I spoke to was polite and friendly.

In such a good school, there are still some things that I have asked the staff to do in order to make things even better. I have asked them to set higher targets for Year 2 earlier in Year 1. I have asked them to give older pupils more detailed written advice when they mark your work, to help you to understand exactly how to improve it to meet your targets.

Thank you again for your welcome. I hope you enjoy the rest of the term. Yours sincerely

Janet Simms Lead inspector