

Otterhampton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123692
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314672
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoff Burgess

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Talintyre
Headteacher	Bridget Hemmings
Date of previous school inspection	17 February 2003
School address	School Lane Comwich Bridgwater TA5 2QS
Telephone number	01278 652487
Fax number	01278 653744

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves a rural corner of Somerset with low levels of social deprivation and a stable population. All pupils are White British. Very few are eligible for free school meals. Most children start school with average abilities and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is low. However, with small numbers in each year group, an individual pupil with LDD can significantly alter the overall attainment of that 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 which has greatly improved its learning environment and quality of provision in recent years. As a result, pupils are now making good progress through the school and standards achieved by school leavers are much improved. The fact that this has been achieved during a time when, through no fault of the school, teaching has been much disrupted by staff absences, is testimony to the effectiveness, resilience and teamwork of the headteacher and staff in dealing with the situation. Outstanding use has been made of all funds and resources to transform the school's accommodation and grounds. Difficulties with staffing have been used as an opportunity to develop the roles of all staff and revitalise the way the school operates. As a result of this good leadership and management, the school is in a good position to move forward and build on the many improvements already made.

Parents are very happy that the school is helping their children to 'learn in a fun but disciplined and positive way'. This is very much helped by the way the school provides a rich and varied curriculum with plenty of extras to keep pupils interested and involved. Pupils are proud of their school, one calling it 'a friendly and active school where we never get bored'. Behaviour is exemplary and, with all staff acting as excellent role models, relationships are excellent. Pupils are very happy in school as shown by their above average attendance, confidence and self-esteem. Very good attention is given to ensuring that pupils are healthy, fit and safe. Their well-being benefits greatly from the excellent play equipment and other outside facilities that pupils enjoy at playtimes. Pupils are very pleased to play their part in the school and the wider community and their good all-round personal development makes a strong contribution to their learning.

In most year groups, standards are above average but, as in Year 3 and last year's Year 6, a few pupils who find learning difficult can reduce the overall picture to average or below. Despite the disruption to teaching noted above, the school has ensured that pupils' learning has not suffered and pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching. However, the school acknowledges that writing is a relative weakness and has begun to take steps to help pupils improve in this area. It also recognises that, although target setting and tracking procedures are implemented well, the actual targets need to be more challenging for pupils to make outstanding progress. Apart from this, pupils benefit from good care, guidance and support with many aspects of pastoral care outstanding in this small school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the time of the inspection, the small group of children in the Reception class had only been in school for a relatively few morning sessions. Despite falling numbers, the school has invested heavily in keeping a separate Foundation Stage class in the mornings to good effect. Small numbers, good quality teaching, well organised resources and a rich range of activities have ensured that the current group have made a very good start to their time in school. They are happy, confident and fully involved in all that is going on. The fact that the school hosts and works closely with the pre-school group most new starters attend, is a great help to this process.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the expectations of staff and pupils by setting more challenging learning targets and so raise standards.

- Help all pupils to write better by giving them more opportunities to use the literacy skills they have learned in extended free writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

National test results have in recent years ranged from exceptionally high to below average, depending on the make up of the small year groups involved. Although pupils with learning difficulties make good progress with effective guidance and support, their presence in such small year groups makes all the difference in terms of attainment. However, results in Year 6 have generally been above average with pupils making good overall progress from Year 2 to Year 6. The recent history of regular changes of teachers in some classes has meant that this progress has not always been consistent. It is to the school's great credit that the steps it has taken to enable pupils to make up lost ground have been so effective that the value added by the school over time has still been good. For pupils currently in school, the school's records and pupils' current work show that standards are above average in five of the year groups, average in one and below average in one. A common thread is that standards in writing are weaker than in other subjects throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons, around the school and in the playground is a feature of this happy school. Positive attitudes towards learning and each other help to create a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Boys and girls are very considerate towards each other and appreciate how well all staff care for them. They feel safe in school and trust that all adults would help them should a problem arise. Older pupils show a high level of responsibility towards the care and happiness of younger ones and Year 6 thoroughly enjoy 'buddying up' with reception pupils. School councillors feel a sense of responsibility for helping to improve the school environment and the wider community by, for instance, raising funds for the partner school in India. Combined with good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, this prepares pupils well for their later lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's positive test results in recent years are a good indication that, over time, teaching has been effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress. This was backed up by lessons observed during the inspection, which were characterised by calm, purposeful teaching, making very good use of all available resources to engage pupils in well planned, interesting activities. No time is lost in managing behaviour or keeping pupils on task, and pupils' very good attitudes and willingness to contribute and try, make a very strong contribution to their learning. Teaching assistants play an important role in working with groups in the mixed age classes. The regular use of information and communication technology is a strong feature of many lessons. Good use is made of assessment to match and modify work and older pupils say that they find their teachers' marking and comments very helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their education because the curriculum has been made interesting, relevant and in their words, 'fun'. A very good range of ongoing extra activities enriches pupils' experiences. For example, five themed weeks a year enable the whole school to work together to extend learning through topics such as other cultures, environmental issues and the arts. Very good use is made of the local area such as the school's strong relationship with Hinkley Point. Close attention is given to the basic skills in literacy and numeracy and opportunities are being increasingly used to develop these in other subjects. However, the use of writing across the curriculum is underdeveloped. Activities are routinely and creatively modified to meet the varied needs of those with learning difficulties and those who are especially gifted and talented.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard to develop a strong sense of community to good effect. All staff know every pupil and are vigilant about keeping records and fulfilling statutory obligations which ensure pupils' safety. The school works well with parents to ensure that their children have every opportunity to succeed. Parents are very happy with this aspect of the school's work. One noted that, 'The school is very supportive of our children, nurturing and assisting them well as they grow.' Good procedures for setting individual and school targets and tracking improvements have promoted the good progress of most pupils. However, to raise standards, even more challenging targets are needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This is a well run school which has managed to cope very successfully with a very full agenda and an extended period of disruption among staff while still focusing on making sure pupils do well. The key to this has been the headteacher whose contribution to sustaining morale, and developing and nurturing a positive 'can do' ethos and sense of pride within the school community has been excellent. All staff are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development while there is an almost tangible sense of ownership and shared responsibility throughout the school. Everyone is pleased with how well the school is doing but ambitious for its pupils to do even better. As a result, the school is very willing to innovate and ask for and accept advice. Partnerships with other local providers are very important to its development. It has good arrangements for monitoring the quality of its work and is very open and realistic about its strengths and weaknesses. The role of the governing body in providing practical and moral support in recent years has been very important.

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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?	2
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	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?	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	1
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?	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?	2

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	1
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

22 September 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Otterhampton Primary School, Bridgwater, TA5 2QS

Mrs Case and I would like to thank you for helping to make our day with you so enjoyable. You are so lucky to have such a wonderful setting for your school and we think that the way everybody has contributed to making the grounds such a great place for you to work and play is fantastic. Like you, we think that Otterhampton Primary is a good school.

- These are the good things we found:
- Your behaviour is excellent. You work hard and do your best.
- Everybody gets on well together.
- We agree with you that your teachers and helpers are good at helping you learn and you make good progress.
- The things you have to do in class are interesting and fun.
- Your teachers arrange a lot of extra activities for you to enjoy.
- You know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- We know you appreciate all the grown-ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible.
- Your headteacher is great at keeping everybody positive and confident and making the very best use of all the school's resources.
- To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:
- Set you targets that are a little bit harder each year so that by the time you leave you have made even better progress.
- Help you write better by giving you more time to really get involved in writing longer pieces of work about things that interest you.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your best. Again, thank you for all you do to make your school as good as it is. It was a pleasure for us to share it with you for a short time.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Burgess Lead inspector

22 September 2007



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