

Cheddar First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123717
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314687
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Laurie Lewin

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	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline James
Headteacher	Margaret Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Hillfield The Hayes Cheddar BS27 3HN
Telephone number	01934 742546
Fax number	01934 744903

Age group	4–9
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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, especially that of boys and the higher-attaining pupils in writing; the quality of teaching in writing; and how effectively the school uses information about pupils' progress. The inspector gathered evidence from discussions with staff and pupils, lesson observations, samples of pupils' work and reviewed areas of the school's documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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 this report.

Description of the school

This is a large school. Most pupils are White British and a few pupils come from a mixture of other minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that found in most schools. The school has gained the Activemark national accreditation for its work in sports.

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, where pupils achieve well and derive a lot of enjoyment from their lessons and activities. The headteacher has created an atmosphere in which staff work as a strong team and are fully committed to improving the school. Initiatives they have put in place over the last few years have improved standards in reading and mathematics in particular. Parents heap praise on the staff, and particularly the headteacher, and feel that the school does a good job. They are right.

Children start school having attained standards that broadly match the levels expected for their age, although their attainment in communication, language and literacy is weaker than in other areas. They progress well in the Foundation Stage so that by the start of Year 1, they reach slightly above average levels in all areas of learning. The good progress continues through the school so that by the end of Year 4, pupils reach above average standards. However, standards in writing are weaker than in other subjects and in this area, boys and higher-attaining pupils do not always progress as well as they could do. This is because teachers do not currently provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing and do not always make the targets for written work clear enough so that pupils know what to aim at. Much good work is already underway by staff to improve these areas.

Relationships flourish across the school. There is a really good atmosphere in all classes that projects an eagerness to learn on the part of the pupils and a very encouraging approach from all staff that ensures pupils develop confidently. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that all individuals are given the support they need. Pupils hold teachers in high regard and say such things as '...they make our work really interesting ... they always find a way to help you if you get stuck'. Teachers make good use of information about pupils' progress to plan and prepare their lessons so that tasks match the needs of individuals well.

Pupils have an exciting curriculum, with plenty of extra activities, trips and visitors to enrich it. However, there are not enough opportunities provided for pupils to write extensively in different curriculum areas so that pupils' writing skills are not as well boosted in this way as they could be. Staff have already begun work to address this.

Pastoral support and guidance for pupils is excellent and results in pupils showing excellent personal development. Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils feel safe and say they have no qualms about seeking adult assistance if they have any concerns. Pupils show a lot of enthusiasm and their attendance is good. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are polite and have a thoughtful approach towards caring for one another. The wide range of sports opportunities provided for them ensures they keep themselves fit. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The very active school council ensures that pupils have a significant say in helping the school improve. Through this, together with their charity fundraising involvement and the work they do in the community, pupils make an excellent contribution to their immediate and wider community. Pupils acquire a good range of basic skills to ensure their future success. They show a good depth of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. However, the school rightly identifies that scope remains for broadening pupils' understanding and awareness about how people from other ethnic backgrounds live. Pupils receive good academic support and guidance and the school makes good use of all outside agencies and partner organisations to boost pupils' learning. The school has a very inclusive approach and ensures that all pupils with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities have every chance to participate fully. As a result, all of these individuals make good progress. Throughout the school, pupils have individual targets set for them. However, pupils are not always fully clear about these targets and the next steps needed to take them to a higher level of achievement.

The headteacher has led the school forward at a good pace in recent times. Staff and governors work very effectively together and have a clear understanding of what works well and where improvements need to be made. Governors carry out their roles well and have good systems to help keep them fully informed through their monitoring and the briefings they receive. The good rate of improvement in recent times, the clear plans for future actions and the strong commitment and enthusiasm of staff mean there is good potential for further improvement in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Due to well-established induction procedures, children get off to a good start and settle in quickly in the Foundation Stage. They achieve well because the teachers set up a wide range of exciting and interesting activities. These give the children a good balance and range of opportunities to explore and learn independently as well as chances to learn in groups or in whole-class teaching situations. Staff are very successful in boosting children's confidence and excitement for learning. For example, in a lesson seen, children were keen to discuss and investigate how dinosaurs lived and listened to their teacher with rapt attention. The teaching assistants and volunteer class helpers provide valuable backup for the teachers and strong support for individuals and groups of pupils. Teaching assistants, in particular, support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities extremely well to ensure they participate in, and gain from, all activities fully. The school has a good specific outdoor space for Foundation Stage children. Staff put this to good use. However, there is no easy direct access to this area and there are some deficiencies in the range of equipment available. This puts constraints on the chances for teachers to boost fully the learning opportunities for the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure pupils know exactly what to do to produce their best writing and provide a full range of opportunities for them to write extensively in different subject areas in order to improve writing standards, particularly for boys and for all higher-attaining pupils.

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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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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?	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	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

28 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Cheddar First School, Cheddar BS27 3HN

It was really good fun coming to see you at your school! Thank you for making me so welcome, talking to me and helping me during the school's inspection. I especially enjoyed the good discussion I had with some of you from Year 4. My goodness! What a lot of chatterboxes! I learned a lot from talking to you. I think you would all make very good future inspectors!

You will be pleased to know that the school is doing a good job and improving at a good rate. Here are some of some of the most important bits of the report that I thought you might like to know about:

- You work well in lessons and your achievement as you move through the school is good. This helps you to reach above average standards.
- Your personal development is excellent and you learn to become confident, polite and well-mannered as you progress through the school.
- You have an exciting curriculum and your teachers work hard to make it as interesting as possible for you. However, some more opportunities are needed for you to practise your writing in different subjects.
- You told me that your teachers are doing a good job and I agree with you. Your teaching assistants do an excellent job of supporting you.
- The school does a top quality job in making sure you are safe.
- Your headteacher does a tremendous job in helping everyone work together to make the school as good as it is and to make sure it keeps on improving.

To improve further, I have asked staff to do one specific thing to help you do better:

- help you improve your writing even more by ensuring that in every class, you know precisely what to do to produce your best possible work and that you have more opportunities to write at length in different subjects.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.

Yours sincerely Laurie Lewin Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector