

Evercreech Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123755
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314708
Inspection date	11 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Grove

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Sile
Headteacher	Heather Barraclough
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Paradise Crescent Evercreech Shepton Mallet BA4 6EH
Telephone number	01749 830447
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a village and is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little above average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The school is an Investor in People, and holds the Activemark award. A new headteacher was appointed from September 2007, and a new deputy headteacher was then formally appointed from February 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Evercreech Primary is a good school. Parents are highly supportive of the school and are warm in their praise of its positive ethos. Several parents refer specifically to the new leadership. One wrote, for instance, that 'Evercreech is a very well run school with an exceptional headteacher and deputy'. Parents rightly judge that the new leadership has not only raised pupils' performance this year but has also improved the quality of teaching and the motivation of school staff. Another parent wrote appreciatively of recent improvements, judging that 'the school has a vision, and the teaching has a purpose and a future'.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well, are attentive to their teachers, and responsive and confident in class. In the playground and around the school, they are happy, enjoy others' company and play well together. The positive qualities that pupils display result from their good enjoyment of school and the very good relationships with teaching and support staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, there are too few opportunities for them to gain greater awareness of other cultures and of life in multicultural Britain. The overall rate of attendance is inadequate.

When children enter the Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skills are at about the levels expected for their age in most, but not all, areas of learning. They make good progress in their academic and personal development so that they are well prepared for entry to Year 1, though their skills in writing are less well developed than their other skills. At the end of Year 2, overall standards currently remain broadly average, although they have improved. Standards are lower in reading than in other subjects. At the end of Year 6, the standards that pupils reach in English, mathematics and science are above the national average. Almost all pupils in all year groups make at least the expected progress, and the majority make better than expected progress, which is leading to more clearly improved standards at Year 6 than at Year 2. The evidence of good progress by pupils in the current Year 2 indicates that they have made up for their slower progress in the past. Pupils' achievement is therefore good.

Pupils' good overall progress and achievement are a result of good teaching and learning. There is good degree of consistency in the teaching across the school. A good balance is struck between whole-class activities and tasks that are undertaken individually or in groups. The curriculum makes learning interesting for all groups of pupils and has a good impact on their personal as well as their academic development. School staff have devised a well balanced programme which also provides for good links between subjects.

The pastoral care and support for pupils are good. Robust measures are taken to ensure their safety and welfare. The quality of the feedback to pupils from teachers' marking of their work is not consistent. In addition, arrangements to provide academic guidance through target setting are not well developed, with the result that pupils lack advice about the next steps in their learning.

The leadership and management and the governance of the school are good. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. Together, they form a cohesive team. The school has developed a good partnership with parents, and has good links with others, including the area secondary school, the village church, local authority support services and a local business. The school's good self-evaluation and the effective steps taken to introduce improvements show that the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage, and make good progress. Children are happy and take part enthusiastically in the activities planned for them. They enjoy good relationships with teaching and support staff who interact warmly with them and extend their play. Children's behaviour is good, and they display a good level of confidence. They work well independently and co-operate well in groups. Children express themselves clearly in class but the quality of their work in writing is variable. The Foundation Stage teacher is aware of the good aspects of the school's provision and also of the need to improve the outdoor area to provide pupils with better opportunities for their physical and creative development. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good. The leader has been well supported through access to specialist advice, which has had a positive impact on the school's provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 1, especially in reading.
- Work with parents to improve the school's overall level of attendance.
- Improve feedback to pupils from marking and target setting so that pupils better understand the next steps in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

At the end of Year 2 standards are broadly average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show that standards in writing and mathematics rose in 2008, but reading results were lower than in the previous year. In mathematics, a high proportion of pupils reached the higher levels, but in writing and especially in reading fewer pupils attained these standards. At Year 6, overall standards have risen substantially in 2008. The results show improvements in all subjects, and especially in English. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard rose in all subjects. The numbers of pupils who attained the higher Level 5 in English and science also increased considerably. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils as a result of good support by teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy at school, and develop secure relationships with school staff and with one another. They have a good awareness of a healthy lifestyle, and make healthy selections at mealtimes. The daily 'Wake and Shake' session provides all pupils with regular physical exercise, and provides an energetic and enjoyable start to each morning. Pupils feel safe at school. Bullying incidents are rare and pupils are confident to approach adults, who deal promptly with the few concerns that arise. Events such as sporting tournaments enable pupils to make good contributions to the local community. The school council contributes well to the life of the school. For example, pupils planned the layout of the new adventure playground. The good social skills that pupils develop, and their good standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) by Year 6, provide good support for their future economic well-being. The school's attendance rate has risen in the last year, but remains below average, mainly as a consequence of holidays taken in term-time by a small number of families.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Well developed relationships provide a very good basis for work in classrooms. Teachers are skilful in building on these relationships to involve pupils in the learning. Lessons are regularly conducted at a good pace and include a good variety of activities that sustain pupils' interest well. Teachers provide good explanations for pupils. Their use of questioning techniques challenges pupils' thinking well and, as a result, pupils often make extended contributions in class. Pupils are also frequently asked to develop their own ideas through co-operative work with a 'talk partner'. Most aspects of lesson planning are good. Some planning includes a range of tasks that are well matched to the broad span of ages and abilities in each class, but this is not consistently the case. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and includes good links between subjects. For instance, ICT is well used to support learning in other subjects. Good displays in classrooms and around the school, including some engaging craftwork, do much to arouse pupils' interest. The school makes additional provision for pupils who are gifted and talented and also for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, through the use of various support programmes. Good use is made of the local area to support learning. For instance, pupils visit Dorset as part of their study of coasts in geography, and a local history centre when they learn about the Anglo-Saxons. However, opportunities to support the development of pupils' multicultural understanding are limited. Visitors include two theatre groups, and a whole-school drumming workshop is held. Such enhancements represent good extensions to the curriculum. The good range of extra-curricular activities includes a number of team games, demonstrating the school's strong sporting culture.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has rigorous systems to protect pupils. Arrangements to provide child protection are supported by up-to-date staff training. All safeguarding procedures to check the backgrounds of staff are fully in place. Most adults are trained in first aid. Regular health and safety checks of the premises and risk assessments for school excursions are undertaken. At playtimes and lunchtimes, good supervision is provided by adults. The school has good links with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Good links with the neighbouring pre-school support induction arrangements. Pupils' smooth transition to secondary school is well supported by prior visits and, in the case of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the school's special educational needs co-ordinator also visits the receiving school to share information. The school makes good use of local authority services to support families about whose children there are attendance or punctuality concerns. There is some good practice in marking pupils' work, such as indicating how well lesson objectives have been met. However, there are inconsistencies across the school in the quality and impact of marking. Classes have learning targets, but this does not extend to individual pupils. Pupils are therefore not clear what they need to do next in order to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new leadership of the school has set a clear direction for improvement. Monitoring activities by school leaders and subject leaders have focused particularly on the teaching of English and of writing, where outcomes in 2007 were below average. Results in 2008 show that good self-evaluation has led to appropriate action that has successfully tackled areas of identified weakness. As a result, the school met or exceeded most of its statutory targets. Leaders also identified pupils' behaviour as a concern, and this has been successfully addressed. The governing body has ensured that statutory requirements are met. Governors are very committed to the school, and show a good understanding of its developing strengths. They support the school well and provide a satisfactory level of challenge.

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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	4
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?	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

15 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Evercreech C of E Primary School BA4 6EH

We would like to thank all of you, and your teachers, for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes. Evercreech Primary is a good school. It is a happy place for children to be, as many of you and your parents say. There are lots of really good things about your school. These are the most important ones.

- Your school has a good ethos and a positive atmosphere about it.
- You have good relationships with the teachers and other adults. They take good care of you.
- You enjoy school and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- Your personal development is good, and this leads to your positive attitudes and your kindness and politeness towards others.
- The school has a good curriculum and a good range of out-of-school activities, which you find interesting and enjoyable.
- The headteacher and the other school leaders are doing a good job. They know what is good about your school and they want to make it even better.
- You are making good progress in your learning, and your standards at Year 6 are above average.
- The teaching in your school is good.
- Your parents are pleased with the school.
- Your school has good relationships with your parents, with the Church and with others.

The headteacher and the other leaders have worked hard to make the school a good place for you. We have asked the school to make things even better by:

- raising your standards at Key Stage 1, especially in reading
- working with parents to make pupils' overall levels of attendance better
- improving the way your work is marked and the way targets are set for you, so that you have a better idea of what you should do next to improve your progress.

You can help by continuing to work hard and taking advantage of the improvements that your teachers will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Grove Lead inspector