

# Chilthorne Domer Church School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123815
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	314729
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Burghart

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	112
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Lehunt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Theresa Hobbs
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Main Street Chilthorne Domer Yeovil BA22 8RD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01935 840407
<b>Fax number</b>	01935 840407

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average, rural primary school with four mixed age classes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but varies widely from year group to year group. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. Prior to the present headteacher's appointment in September 2007 the school experienced considerable disruption to leadership and teaching.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This school provides pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. This is a lesser judgement than at the last inspection in 2004 but represents considerable improvement compared with the local authority's assessment that the school gave cause for concern a year ago. The turnaround has been triggered by the appointment of the present headteacher. Because of her outstanding insight and management, the school has weathered the crisis, which was the result of the extended period of uncertain leadership. It is now back on track and improving fast. 'After a difficult time the school is thriving', 'Since the appointment of the head we have every confidence in the school', 'The last eight months have been a breath of fresh air!' and 'When my daughter leaves the school in July she will miss it and so will I!' are some of the many extremely positive comments that sum up parental opinion. The school continues to take good pastoral and physical care of pupils who respond by behaving well and showing positive attitudes to their work. Relationships are good and underpin pupils' good personal development. This builds successfully on the good start children get in Reception. Standards, which slumped in the previous two years, especially for more able pupils, are improving and are now broadly average with most pupils' achievement satisfactory. There are still pockets of underachievement. In Key Stage 1, this is because work is not always sufficiently challenging. In Key Stage 2, this is most often the result of gaps in pupils' previous learning, primarily arising from missed opportunities in the past in Years 3 and 4. Now that weaknesses in teaching in these year groups have been overcome, most pupils are making satisfactory progress by the time they leave, with signs of good progress in Years 5 and 6. Teaching is satisfactory across the school. There are a variety of good features but still some inconsistencies that restrict pupils' achievement. The introduction of new assessment procedures and better tracking of pupils' progress are having a positive impact on learning. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 know their targets and staff make learning objectives clear. Taking this further to encourage pupils to evaluate their own work in a process known as 'assessment for learning' is already being planned for. This is part of the school's review of the curriculum which, although satisfactory overall and good in some respects such as numeracy, lacks links between subjects to make the best of learning opportunities. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties are making good progress. Governors are keen to support the school. The governing body is well led. Governance is satisfactory rather than good because governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the school's progress first hand. All teachers are beginning to contribute to leadership and management decisions and staff are developing as a good team. On the basis of systems and procedures now in place, and under the excellent guidance of the headteacher, Chilthorne Domer has a good capacity to make further improvements. All concerned appreciate that there is much still to do; the recent very successful track record shows that it can be done.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

This is a happy place! Provision for those in Reception is good. Children are well cared for and effectively taught. They get off to a good start and make good progress from broadly average starting points. Children behave well and show positive attitudes because they feel that staff have their best interests at heart and are prepared to listen. There is an effective diet of learning opportunities based on the recommended Foundation Stage curriculum, including a good balance of play activities and those directed by the teacher. The very popular Wellie Walk combines the two approaches very successfully. However, opportunities for outdoor learning

are restricted by difficult access to the dedicated outside area which, unlike indoor facilities, is not stimulating enough. Children get on well together and make good progress especially in personal, social and emotional development. They show consideration, are willing to share and take their turn. By the end of Reception, children achieve most of what is expected of this age group, emerging as readers and writers, and developing secure mathematical understanding. Reception staff work well as a team. They keep good records and make accurate assessments of what children can do and the progress they make. This information is used well as a basis for their planning.

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

- Raise standards, making even better use of assessment to ensure that pupils, especially the more able, always achieve what they are capable of.
- Use the good teaching already evident in the school as a model to make sure all lessons are taught as well as the best.
- Improve the quality of, and access to, the outdoor learning space for children in Reception.
- Improve the way governors monitor what goes on in the school to make it easier for them to play a full part in evaluating success. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 3**

Following good progress in the Foundation Stage, pupils go on to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. For most, this represents satisfactory progress, but for a minority, for example more able pupils in mathematics, this indicates some underachievement. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. This marks substantial improvement compared with the last two years when standards were well below average in mathematics and science, and more able pupils failed to achieve all that they were capable of. There are still pockets of underachievement, which are largely the legacy of past weaknesses in provision for Years 3 and 4. Pupils have gaps in their learning which are difficult to overcome despite making good progress in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, progress is satisfactory overall.

### **Personal development and well-being**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good profile described in the last report in 2004 has been sustained despite some problems which were the result of the school's unsettled management. Pupils are courteous and show interest in their work. They are keen to say they like school and feel safe. Attendance is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall with good features in the moral and social aspects. Whilst the role of the school council is underdeveloped, pupils do play a positive part in school life, for example as class and playtime monitors, and make a good contribution to the local community. Pupils know what makes for a healthy diet and are aware of how to keep fit. Extra-curricular sporting activities are popular. Notwithstanding a small minority of pupils who occasionally misbehave, standards of behaviour in and around the school are good. There are strengths in how pupils are happy to work together. Ongoing improvements to standards of basic literacy and numeracy skills ensure pupils are suitably prepared for future study and life in general.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

School and local authority monitoring records show that teaching and learning have been significantly improved this year. Particularly noteworthy are improvements in Years 3 and 4 since September 2007. This inspection finds that overall pupils' learning is sound and that the quality of teaching is satisfactory, ranging from adequate to good. Strengths include making learning objectives clear, good marking to the newly introduced scheme, perceptive questioning and strong relationships. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the way pupils are taught, especially in support of those with additional needs. Weaknesses in teaching feature activities that do not challenge pupils sufficiently, the pace of learning being too slow and expectations not high enough.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum ensures that all required elements are taught. The introduction of a programme known as SEAL gives sound, and improving, support for pupils' personal, social and health education. The introduction of a rolling two year programme means planning for mixed age classes is now secure. A recent move to address the underachievement of pupils in Key Stage 2 has led to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science receiving more attention than other areas. This is having a positive effect on standards. However, there has been a tendency for subjects to be taught too much in isolation. The school has appreciated this and has begun a detailed curriculum review. A good indication of success so far is the way reading standards have been improved this year (particularly, but not exclusively, in Years 1 and 2) through a change in approach and better resourcing.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. There is rigorous and successful attention to health and safety and all required checks are carried out. Staff know pupils well and relationships are good. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and the few with disabilities is much improved and is now good. There is a clear structure designed to identify and plan for individual needs, which is well managed. As a result, such pupils make good progress. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory. Local authority monitoring records indicate significant progress from this point of view since the start of the school year. There have been substantial improvements in the way assessment is used to show pupils how well they are doing and this is a key factor in how standards are being raised. However, opportunities are missed to involve pupils in evaluating their own progress, but addressing this already forms part of the school's forward planning.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

Following a very difficult period, the school is once again well led and managed. In her short time at the school, the headteacher has made an accurate audit and evaluation of what needs to be done to make improvements. She has rekindled staff enthusiasm, raised expectations

and improved morale. The headteacher has the positive support of staff, governors, parents, pupils and the local authority. They all report significant improvements in the school since she took over. The school's educational direction is clear; planning and systems are in place to achieve it. Decisions, policies and procedures are carefully evaluated for their impact on pupils' learning. Challenging targets are used well as the driving force for improvements. All teachers contribute to the school's development planning. However, in some respects, the role of subject coordinators is underdeveloped, for example in literacy and in some non-core subjects. Nevertheless, there are strengths to build on in the way the Foundation Stage and provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are managed, and in how new assessment procedures are being introduced. Governors are supportive. Their governance is satisfactory but governors have not established effective ways to monitor for themselves what happens in the school, which makes it difficult for them to play a full part in evaluating strengths and weaknesses.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### 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	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	3
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	3

### 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>	2
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	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	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**

- 22 May 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Chilthorne Domer Church School, Yeovil BA22 8RD  
Many thanks for your help during the recent inspection. We are especially grateful to members of the school council for sharing their views and telling us how much you all enjoy coming to school. It is clear that you agree with your parents that the school is much better now than it was and that it is still improving. The school gives you a satisfactory education. Here are some highlights.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start because they are well looked after and taught well.
- Your behaviour is good (this doesn't mean it's perfect!).
- Staff take good care of you.
- Those of you with special learning needs are making good progress.
- Your new headteacher is making sure the school is well run. This is what the school should do to improve.
- Make sure you all make as much progress as you should.
- See that all lessons are taught as well as the best ones.
- Improve the outside learning area for children in Reception.
- Improve the way in which governors find out for themselves what is going on in the school. You can play an important part by listening carefully to what teachers tell you and always trying your best. Yours sincerely Mike Burghart Lead inspector

22 May 2008

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**Inspection of Chilthorne Domer Church School, Yeovil BA22 8RD**

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This is what the school should do to improve.

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Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart  
Lead inspector