

Monteclefe Church of England VA Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123838
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314735
Inspection date	15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Anthony Shield

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Speed
Headteacher	David Norton
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	School Lane Kirkham Street Somerton TA11 7NL
Telephone number	01458 272587
Fax number	01458 274498

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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: achievement and standards, pupils' personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies, minutes and other school documentation. Observation of the school at work, interviews with members of the teaching staff and pupils, and parental questionnaires also provided evidence. 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

Monteclefe Church of England Junior School is smaller than most primary schools. It serves the market town of Somerton and its surrounding villages. Most pupils are of White British origin. On entry, pupils' attainment is wide ranging but is just below average overall, and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average.

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. What makes it so special is its community spirit. Parents are very supportive, pupils are proud to belong, and staff are loyal and hardworking. Good links with its partner infant and secondary school through the Community Learning Partnership, and with the local community, through such events as the Christmas carol concert, give pupils an awareness of their role in society as a whole. The family ethos ensures relationships through the school are caring and supportive. The school prides itself on its inclusive attitudes and has successfully absorbed some vulnerable children with emotional and physical needs. Pupils look after one another, and 'playground friends' ensure no pupils feel left out. Within this climate of care and good relationships, pupils are given the confidence to flourish. Overall standards in English and mathematics are broadly average by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Given their starting points, pupils make good progress, particularly in English and science, and overall achievement is good. Standards in science have been consistently good in recent years and, while results in national tests in English have varied, measures taken to improve the quality of writing have been particularly successful. In 2007, results improved in English, but slipped in mathematics. Pupils lack confidence in applying their numeracy skills in different contexts, and in lessons, expectations are not always high enough. While challenging targets were met in English, results were just below targets in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Good progress is the result of good teaching which encourages good attitudes and purposeful learning. Pupils enjoy the lessons and like their teachers. 'They like a good joke' is how one pupil described the warm relationships and sense of fun engendered in lessons. Classrooms are welcoming environments and learning is well managed. Instructions and explanations are clear and questions are used effectively to probe for understanding. Well-targeted support from teaching assistants ensures pupils with learning difficulties are included and encouraged to succeed. Both through the marking and feedback in lessons, pupils are given encouragement, as well as guidance on how to improve. Some variability remains in the quality of teaching, particularly in the use of assessment to plan work which challenges each and every pupil at their own level. The good curriculum is well planned and the recent re-structuring of classes means that it meets the needs of all pupils more securely. While there is a strong focus on basic skills in literacy and numeracy, the school also ensures pupils have good access to all subjects. French, physical education and whole-class instrumental music are taught by specialist teachers. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits and visitors, and residential visits in particular make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. An extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities adds much to the overall provision. The school's values are reflected in the pupils' good personal development, a strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They particularly enjoy the opportunities the school provides for music; the samba and ukulele lessons are especially popular. In lessons, pupils are keen to please and try hard, responding well to motivational strategies such as table and house points. Their behaviour is thoughtful and considerate. Pupils have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles, reflected in the school's recent award of both Healthy School status and Activemark. They feel safe in school and know that bullying is taken seriously and will be sorted out. The school council carried out important work in conjunction with Anti-Bullying Week, and has put forward ideas on environmental issues and playground equipment. Pupils know their views are listened to. These responsible attitudes help prepare pupils successfully for their future. Above all, pupils enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their above-average attendance. The school pays careful attention to every child.

Indeed, good care, guidance and support are at the root of all that the school does. Pupils' health, safety and welfare, including child protection and safeguarding, are a high priority. The care and support of vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are especially good. Academic guidance is good and increasingly effective as teachers use assessment data to track pupils' progress, raise expectations and set challenging targets. A good start has been made with relatively new procedures, though more needs to be done to make this a feature of everyday practice. Meetings between the headteacher and class teachers to review each pupil's progress are being used well to ensure pupils are on track, and intervention strategies are programmed for pupils at risk of underachieving. The headteacher's determined leadership, ably supported by his deputy, has created a school whose values are widely shared. Leadership and management are good. The school is moving forward strongly as a result of a clear focus on improving both standards and teaching. The drive to improve standards of writing has been effective and better use of challenging targets is being used effectively to raise expectations. Staff are ambitious for further improvement, and in this they are well supported by the governing body, who provide committed support and challenge. Monitoring is ensuring accurate and realistic self-evaluation. The school improvement plan identifies sensible priorities, but lacks a clear focus on how these are to be achieved. There is a commitment to improve further, and the school has good capacity to do so. Parental support is strong. They are particularly pleased with the welcoming environment, the approachability of staff and enthusiasm with which their children come to school. Typical of parental comments made to the inspector was: 'We have been delighted with the school for our children... and have nothing but praise for a wonderful school.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations and standards in mathematics through applying numeracy skills in different contexts.
- Use assessment more consistently to plan work which challenges individual pupils at their own level.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 16 January 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Monteclefe C of E Junior School, Somerton TA11 7NL Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed talking to you and particularly liked the friendly welcome you gave me. Yours is a good school and you are rightly proud to attend it. These are the most important things to say about your school
- There is a fantastic sense of community in the school, and you all look after each other very well.
- You get on well with your teachers and with each other.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and fun. You work hard in lessons and try your best!
- You enjoy going to school and take part in everything with enthusiasm.
- You are well behaved, friendly and polite.
- There is a good range of clubs you can join.
- The school takes very good care of you and the support given to those of you who need most help is particularly good.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are working successfully to make your school one of the best!
- Most of you make good progress, but I have asked the school to make sure you do better in mathematics, and understand how to use your number skills.
- I have also asked the teachers to use the knowledge of how well each of you is doing to set work which is always going to make you think hard. Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. With best wishes for the future, Yours sincerely Mr Tony Shield Lead inspector

Annex B



16 January 2008

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With best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mr Tony Shield
Lead inspector