

Timberscombe Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123841
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314737
Inspection date	3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	30
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	4
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Warwick
Headteacher	Marcus Capel
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Timberscombe Minehead TA24 7TY
Telephone number	01643 841259
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very small rural school. It has recently become part of a federation with another small school and there is a joint governing body. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in the Reception class for children from the age of four. They share a classroom with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The school has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The warm, caring and vibrant ethos creates an atmosphere in which all pupils thrive. Exceptional leadership and management by the headteacher and governors ensure that pupils love coming to school and take part in all that the school offers with high levels of enthusiasm. The school has the overwhelming support of parents. They recognise the high quality commitment of staff which results in pupils enjoying all aspects of school life and feeling safe, secure and valued. 'The school, staff and pupils are like an extended family and we feel the protective nurturing blanket constantly. I am certain there is no better schooling available' is a typical comment written by a parent. The school has close links with schools from many other surrounding villages. The development of a joint governing body for the two federated schools has been very successful and has resulted in high quality shared opportunities for staff and pupils. The two schools have a joint curriculum and benefit from sharing teaching expertise in subjects such as music, French and sport as well as after-school clubs. Pupils regularly work with their peers from their partner school and develop close friendships.

The exceptional quality of support provided for pupils results in their outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils love school. 'Everyone is helpful and gets on well together. We do some really exciting things', commented one pupil. The close links with the parish church and the local area mean that pupils are well known by the whole community. They feel part of local life and work hard to contribute to it. They regularly entertain elderly people in local care homes with performances such as bell-ringing. Their awareness of the challenges facing their link school in Zambia has resulted in fund-raising projects and pupils proudly talk about how they have put in a water tap and helped to provide a classroom in that school.

The school has maintained the high standards noted at the time of the last inspection. When they enter school, children's skills are broadly as expected for their age, although they vary considerably because of the very small numbers in each year group. Good provision in the EYFS results in children achieving well in all their areas of learning. Their accommodation has improved considerably, although the outdoor area does not always provide the exciting learning opportunities found in the classroom. As pupils move through the school, they achieve exceptionally well, reaching well above average standards, particularly in reading and mathematics because of some excellent teaching and support. It is also because of the exciting and vibrant curriculum which enables them to work collaboratively with other schools. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of very high quality support.

Leaders are committed to improvement and rigorously monitor how well each individual pupil is doing and identify ways in which they could do better. Very effective use is made of challenging targets to enable individual successes. The improved opportunities created by the federation have ensured that the school maintains its high standards and has increased the quality and range of learning opportunities for all pupils. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT), for example, has improved significantly since the last inspection with high levels of resources and access for pupils and staff. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Reception class is good. Children enjoy school. They quickly settle and learn the routines of the classroom. They behave well, although a few find it difficult to listen. They benefit from some exciting activities in the classroom. When children enter the Reception class their skills are broadly as expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning because of skilled teaching, reaching above average standards for their age by the time they enter Year 1. The improvements to their accommodation since the last inspection enable them to develop their creative skills more successfully and to learn how to be more independent in their activities. Photographs of past work show that children regularly go on trips to the local area and celebrate festivals such as Divali which helps to raise their awareness of the wider community. As a result, their personal development and well-being are good. They take part in many activities with their older peers and benefit from the good role models that these provide. Good quality support from the teaching assistants ensures that children are known well and always have someone to talk to. They are exceptionally well looked after and are safe and secure. Children are developing very good ICT skills because of the high quality resources and the many opportunities to use computers. The outdoor area is easily accessible by children but activities and resources are not as exciting or as varied as they are in the classroom. This limits opportunities for children to make choices about where they want to work and play. Leadership of the EYFS is good. Leaders know the children very well and monitor their progress rigorously.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor learning area for children to ensure that it is as rich and varied as that found in the classroom.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From starting points that are broadly as expected, pupils make outstanding progress and achieve very well. This is because of very good and often excellent teaching which regularly challenges pupils to improve. Standards vary with each year group because of the very small numbers but inspection evidence shows that standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2. Pupils continue their good progress through Years 3 and 4 so that standards continue to rise. They are above average overall in Year 4 and well above in reading and mathematics. The high standards have been maintained since the last inspection and have improved in ICT. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of regular and consistent support and because of some high quality guidance by teaching assistants in particular. Achievement in music, French and sport are much enhanced by specialist teaching and links with their partner school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy school because of the very many exciting activities they are offered. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in the excellent attitudes, behaviour and harmony evident in all aspects of school life. As a result, attendance is rising and is now above average. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong, supported by

the very close links with the local church and the Christian ethos that pervades school life. Pupils say there is no bullying and that everyone gets on well. They regularly help each other with, for example, older and younger pupils working in partnership to develop their reading skills. Pupils feel safe and secure at school. They care a great deal about others and community links are excellent. Close links with pupils from a school in Zambia have resulted in pupils sending letters and photographs of themselves and also cameras so that pupils there can take and send back their own photographs. This has led to a clear understanding by pupils of the struggle some pupils have in other parts of the world. As a result, they are keen fund-raisers and work hard for many different charities. Pupils take part in many different sporting activities and have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles including the need to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. They are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Challenging tasks and very positive relationships are key features of lessons. Teachers ensure that interaction with pupils allows information to be gathered about how well they understand what they are doing. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and leads to the many exciting experiences that are planned for pupils, resulting in outstanding achievement and excellent progress. For example, during a spelling lesson in Years 3 and 4, pupils demonstrated very good understanding of spelling rules because of the good examples given by the teacher through rhyming. High quality examples of how spelling can change the meaning of words engaged pupils in discussion very well. Similarly in music, an excellent range of activities and the innovative approach used to encourage confidence and skill helped to improve singing and enjoyment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils are regularly excited by the activities provided for them. The close cooperation between the two federated schools has resulted in joint curriculum projects that are highly valued by pupils. For example, pupils regularly undertake trips and residential experiences with their peers from their partner school, helping to extend friendships and improve personal development. Joint planning ensures that teachers' expertise is extended so that activities are often innovative and challenging. Pupils benefit from many links with other local schools and with the local community and the wider world. The range of clubs, often shared between schools, is extensive and very well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care that the school provides for all the pupils is outstanding. Pupils are well known and relationships are very strong. Procedures to keep them safe and secure are robust and fully meet government requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported so that they feel confident and fully involved in the life of the school. As a result, they achieve very well. Academic guidance is of a very high quality. Pupils' achievements are regularly checked and their progress is measured to ensure that they are making sufficient

progress. They know their targets and know how to improve their work. They are regularly involved in their own and in peer assessment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are very successful in creating an atmosphere in which all pupils are valued. The strong sense of community ensures that pupils are well known and always have someone to turn to. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school. Leaders have tackled areas that require improvement very well and, as a result, ICT for example, has improved significantly so that pupils are confident and skilled users. The biggest challenge facing leaders has been the federation with another small local school. Links are now very well established at all levels. The joint governing body has an excellent view of the schools' strengths and areas that require improvement. Monitoring and self-evaluation are excellent and challenging targets are used very well to improve provision and standards. The provision of additional accommodation for the youngest children in the EYFS has resulted in space for more creative activities that are helping children to improve their skills. Leaders are aware that there is more to do to improve provision in this area further and plans are already well advanced to provide a covered area to extend outdoor learning.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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	1
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**

4 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Timberscombe C of E First School, Minehead TA24 7TY

Thank you very much for your help on our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and hearing all about the things you do at school. This letter is to tell you about the things we found out about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. This is because you work very hard so that you achieve better than pupils in most other schools. We were very pleased to see that you come to school more regularly than you used to and this is helping you to make better progress. You behave excellently and told us that you really like your school. You lead really healthy lives. I particularly enjoyed the healthy lunch we shared and the way you knew why it was important to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. You benefit from some excellent teaching and some very exciting activities. Your teachers keep you safe and take exceptionally good care of you. You work extremely well with older people in your village and told us some interesting things about your friends in Zambia. The youngest children in the Reception class make good progress and enjoy their learning. Their outdoor classroom is not as exciting as the indoor classroom because there are too few activities out there.

Leaders of your school work hard to help you improve. They manage the school excellently, making sure that you enjoy your lessons and have lots of different activities. They have made sure that you have plenty of friends by making good links with other schools. You work very well with your partner school.

We are asking the school to do one thing to make your school even better.

- Improve the outdoor area for the youngest children so that there are more exciting things for them to do outside.

Thank you again for your help and best wishes for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Denise Morris

Lead inspector