

Coombe Bissett Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 126382 |
| Local Authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 315524 |
| Inspection date | 11 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Deborah Zachary |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 86 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Reginald Barrett |
| Headteacher | Clair Marshall |
| Date of previous school inspection | 27 April 2004 |
| School address | Shutts Lane Coombe Bissett Salisbury SP5 4LU |
| Telephone number | 01722 718380 |
| Fax number | 01722 718380 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: • the extent to which the range of recent initiatives have been successful in increasing the rate of pupils' progress • how well the new leadership identified areas for improvement, the strategies that were put into place and the impact of the leadership over the last 18 months. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' progress, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, observations of pupils at play, study of the school development plan and an analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire. 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 self-evaluation assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small school draws its pupils from the village of Coombe Bissett and surrounding farms and hamlets. It also has a significant number of pupils from military families and the number of pupils who arrive or leave the school in the middle years is much higher than in most schools. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnic origin. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, but a higher proportion than usual have a statement of special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Coombe Bissett CofE Primary School is a good school. It is rapidly improving, and pupils are now achieving well after a period in which their progress has been slower. Discipline is very good – friendly but firm with high expectations – and as a result pupils' behaviour is excellent. The headteacher has shown exceptional leadership and management since her arrival in September 2006 and has had a huge impact on the ethos of the school. Parents are highly satisfied. As one wrote, 'Small school – big difference!'

Over the last five terms the headteacher and staff have significantly improved the progress of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, through a sustained programme of staff training, support for teaching and the implementation of a rigorous system of assessment and tracking. They have renewed their vision of what they want to achieve, drawing up new school aims and working closely together to ensure a consistent approach for pupils. The pupils themselves wrote a school 'promise' instead of more traditional school rules, and they greatly value some distinctive things that the promise entails, such as the smartness of their school uniform. They contribute to the community in many ways – through recycling, for example, as well as the school council.

The pupils' personal development is good. Some aspects are very good, such as their spiritual and social development. They have a strong appreciation of beauty, and in an assembly demonstrated a mature understanding of the things we should thank God for. They look after each other, appreciating and supporting those who need help. They understand what they need to do to be healthy and safe, and they are looked after very well by the school, both through the adults' care of individuals and through rigorous safeguarding procedures. Many parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire greatly praised the care their children receive.

Although a very small number of responses indicated that the school's resources were not fully meeting their children's special needs, others whose children had learning difficulties and/or disabilities said they could not be more pleased. The school's support for these pupils is good, and they make good progress.

Teaching and learning are good, but there is some variation between the different classes. The development of teaching in Key Stage 1 has been slowed by staff sickness and changes, and the school's monitoring has identified that expectations, pace and challenge are not always high enough to ensure good progress. However, there is good practice in all age groups in the school, where teachers' expectations are very high and pace rapid, and the most able are challenged well. In a mathematics lesson, able pupils in Years 5 and 6 were being really stretched by work involving translation (moving shapes around a grid). Others in the group were also being challenged using the same ideas but with instructions that were framed less formally. One Year 6 pupil summed up her lessons by saying, 'You learn really loads!' As well as learning, pupils also enjoy their lessons. Years 1 and 2 pupils thoroughly enjoyed guessing whether items in the room were longer or shorter than 30 centimetres and then finding out for themselves whether they were right. In one Years 3/4 lesson there was a wonderful moment of surprise and a great buzz when the pupils, expecting to have to weigh up the pros and cons of owning a goldfish, a pony or a lizard as a pet, were confronted instead with the images of a whale, a unicorn and a dragon to write about.

Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Staff help children to settle well, not only through the good provision in the Foundation Stage but also through support when they arrive in other year groups. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average by Year 6, supported by

curricular innovations such as the narrative writing project and the mathematics progression project. The good curriculum also has particular strengths in the activities that are used to support pupils' personal development. Pupils are given good guidance to help them take responsibility for their learning. They know their targets and are aware of what they are trying to learn in lessons and what they have to do to improve their work. Marking is effective.

Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation has largely been led by the headteacher and is very accurate. A detailed breakdown of the progress made by pupils this year shows it is good, but generally more rapid in Key Stage 2 and the Foundation Stage than in Key Stage 1. It also shows that progress within Key Stage 1 is more rapid in reading and mathematics than in writing. This slower progress in writing is also evident in Year 3. The strengths in reading and mathematics reflect the school's focus for development over the last two years. The headteacher is leaving the school at the end of term, but subject leaders are now better skilled, and are becoming more involved in monitoring and evaluation. Their contribution to leadership is sound. The school has sound capacity to continue to improve.

Governance is good. Although a number of governors are recently appointed, the governing body supports and monitors the school well. They are well prepared to make the appointment of a new headteacher and have made secure arrangements for the management of the school in the interim.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and children quickly learn school routines. Every activity is planned to be a learning experience. For example, children enjoyed counting pieces of fruit and water bottles at snack time, some spontaneously commenting on what fruit would be left after everyone had a piece. They certainly understand that fruit and water are good for them. The children make good progress through the year, with some reading records showing exceptional progress in their first term. The school gathers a lot of information about children's attainment and has recently introduced a new system of data analysis, but this is still under development.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Increase progress in writing in Years 1, 2 and 3.
- Improve the consistency of high expectations, pace and challenge in teaching.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 1 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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

12 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Coombe Bissett CofE Primary School, Salisbury SP5 4LU

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited this week. A particular thank you to those in Year 6 and elsewhere who told me your views about the school. I am writing to tell you what I found out.

I think you go to a good school. You are making good progress and your behaviour is excellent. You are careful and considerate of others and enjoy your learning. The grown-ups look after you well and the school is well led. I was very interested to see all the changes to the buildings and hear about the plans for the garden and the play areas.

You are very clear about how to keep yourself healthy and safe, and I was very impressed with the way you help in the school, for example through the council and the recycling activities, and also the way you collect for charities.

Everyone in the school wants to improve and I have suggested two areas that could be better. First, the children in Years 1, 2 and 3 could be making quicker progress in their writing. Second, whilst most lessons are really good and interesting, occasionally the teachers could challenge you to move on more quickly.

You can help with both these things by trying your best.

Best wishes for the future

Deborah Zachary Lead inspector