

Buckland Newton Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113776
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	325881
Inspection date	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Deborah Zachary

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	100
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Oswald
Headteacher	Nicola Ralph
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Buckland Newton Dorchester DT2 7BY
Telephone number	01300 345393
Fax number	01300 345393

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average, and for this reason most classes contain two year groups. For example, those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, who are all reception-aged children, are taught with Year 1 pupils. The school draws its pupils from the village and surrounding area and the large majority are brought to the school by bus. Almost all of the pupils come from a White British background and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is 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 where pupils achieve well. Its particular strengths are the exceptional care and support provided for the pupils, and the excellent variety of ways in which pupils take responsibility and contribute to the school community. Parents are extremely enthusiastic about what the school does for their children. The following comment was typical of those made in the questionnaire returns: 'We are delighted with our children's progress and feel the school really involves us in all aspects of school life.'

The headteacher leads with sensitivity and empowers her staff. She has ensured that they are a highly cohesive team, and that all teachers are effective in their leadership and management. As a result the school knows its strengths and weaknesses extremely well. Planning is very well thought through, and improvements are rapid. For example, in 2007 Year 6 did not do as well in their writing tests as the school had expected. The reasons were analysed and new strategies adopted; as a result, writing is now a strength throughout the school and pupils are making outstanding progress. No particular subject areas are weak, but progress in mathematics is currently no better than satisfactory in some year groups in Key Stage 2, as is progress in reading in Key Stage 1. Standards vary from year to year because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group, but standards are generally above average by the time pupils leave Year 6.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to stay healthy and they feel very safe. They behave well and are keen to take care of each other. For example, there is a friendship stop in the playground that can be used by any pupils feeling lonely to indicate that they want someone to play with. Thanks to strong links with the village and church, the pupils feel very much a part of their local community. They have a basic understanding that Britain is made up of many different cultures, but this is a comparatively underdeveloped area.

Teaching is good. Teachers engage with pupils and make sure that they are really involved in their work, telling them what they are going to learn and how to improve. Activities and resources are very interesting and as a result the pupils much enjoy their lessons. For example, what could have been a mundane session revising science vocabulary really took off because the pupils were led to compose a rap about the words. The school has plans to develop the curriculum further, but the writing strategies that have been so effectively introduced are already having an impact across other subjects. For example, the use of talking partners – where pairs of pupils are asked to have a very quick word to share ideas – is effective both for developing language skills such as expression and vocabulary and for reflecting on the subject of the lesson. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good links with pre-school providers ensure that the children settle quickly, and enjoy coming to school. For the last two years, the Reception children have started school with skills and understanding slightly below those expected for their age, particularly in language and calculation. They enjoy a good range of exciting learning activities, both indoors and out, and make good progress. By the end of the year, they have reached average standards in most areas of learning. Activities are well matched to the various needs of the children, so that all can learn and succeed. The children are well supported by the adults, who show high levels of care

and encourage children to develop good habits and behaviour. Activities where the children pretend to play different roles particularly stimulate them. For example, they made buns with play dough, and then sold them in their 'shop'. The buns were 1p to most customers, but £100 to the inspector! All adults know the children well and make regular checks on their progress, using this information well to determine the next steps in learning. The improved outdoor area provides a safe place for play and more formal learning, and there is mostly a good balance between self-chosen and adult-led activities. This benefits progress in all areas of learning, but particularly creative and physical development. There are good arrangements to ensure children's safety and health, and they are well versed in such activities as washing their hands before eating. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is effective in raising children's achievement and making improvements to the provision. For example, the regular daily work on phonics is having a positive impact on reading and writing: last year progress in writing was satisfactory, but this year it has been much quicker.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the rate of progress in reading for pupils in Key Stage 1, and the rate of progress in mathematics for pupils in the first three years of Key Stage 2.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the wide range of cultures that make up Britain today.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' progress is good overall throughout the school. Their achievement in writing is excellent, and the current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach high standards at the end of the year. Their progress in reading is good. In mathematics, they are on track to reach broadly average standards and, though they have learnt faster in Year 6, they have made satisfactory progress overall through Years 3 to 6. The school's tracking system confirms that this pattern of progress in writing being much stronger than in mathematics, with reading in the middle, is typical of other Key Stage 2 year groups. Results in 2007 were very different, with significant underachievement in writing, but substantial improvements were starting to show in 2008, when English and science were strongest. Though mathematics standards were slightly lower, the school's very challenging targets were met in both English and mathematics.

In 2008, the Year 2 pupils' assessments showed excellent progress in both writing and mathematics, with satisfactory progress in reading. The current Year 2 pupils are again maintaining this pattern. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally making the same progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are extremely well aware of the need to eat healthily, and the level of their participation in sport is high. Pupils in Year 1 particularly enjoyed their work on designing seed packets for vegetables, and the school exploits links with local food producers very effectively. They thoroughly enjoy lessons because, as one said, 'We do lots of fun activities.' Attendance is good, and pupils are very confident that if they have any worries they are able to go to any adult for help. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is nurtured by links with the church and the local community. Art and particularly music are very strong, but pupils have less knowledge of British cultures that are not their own. In other ways, however, they are well prepared for the future. Their basic skills are well developed and they are committed

to recycling and reusing waste. They learn about democracy through the very active school council, plan, cost and prepare food, and cost out their production of the school newspaper.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned and activities and worksheets well designed to bring out the key things the pupils need to learn. Discipline is effective and teachers give clear instructions and question well. Teachers provide well-chosen practical activities to support pupils' understanding. Year 4, for example, thoroughly enjoyed learning about capacity during the inspection through measuring out water and rice. Years 2 and 3 were engrossed in an experiment to find out which material could be used to best insulate a 'house' to keep warmth in. The school is rightly committed to ensuring that pupils have plenty of learning through investigation, and teachers are working ably to get the difficult balance of direction and independence matched to pupils' abilities. During the inspection this was generally well done, but on one occasion the younger pupils were asked to come up with plans that were a little beyond them, while, on another occasion, some older ones were capable of more independence in designing their task.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enriched by well-planned arts weeks, themed days and a wide range of visits and visitors. It is also enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, with a good number staying after school despite the need for parents to arrange their own transport. Though classes contain more than one year group, the school ensures that the work covered meets the pupils' needs. Provision for music is very good, and there is a brass band. The development of basic skills such as writing and information and communication technology is carefully planned so that they are reinforced by work across different subjects. The school is at present redesigning the curriculum to reflect the interests of the pupils and their different learning styles in a more creative way.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents greatly praise the 'friendly family atmosphere' of the school. What this means in practice is that pupils are known by name and nurtured by all the adults. The school's leaders are very well aware of the background of each child, and they ensure that nobody misses out on activities for economic reasons. They are careful to make sure all parents are welcomed, and take imaginative steps to ensure all pupils feel extremely well cared for. For example, a brief dictionary of words to do with first aid and parts of the body is kept with medical resources, so that the few pupils who have a different first language can be helped if they have hurt themselves. Staff and pupils greet each other and chat, and pupils are encouraged to mix across the age groups. Statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met, and risk assessments carried out appropriately. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Those with behavioural disabilities, for example, are enabled to play freely with other pupils through being supported in an unobtrusive way. Those with learning difficulties benefit from clearly planned provision and support, and their learning targets are usually very well focused. Target setting and guidance are very good throughout the school. Marking is very helpful. As one

pupil said, 'I was shown several different strategies for my maths and now I'm at the top of the group.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has established an ethos in which all staff contribute to the school's direction, whilst she retains a strong steering role. Leadership of literacy and the development of assessment of pupils' performance have proved to be exceptionally strong. The acting deputy headteacher has also made a powerful contribution to improvement. Staff are encouraged to train in new areas, for example when pupils with particular needs arrive at the school. Self-evaluation is excellent. Teaching is very well monitored and progress very closely tracked.

Governance is good. The chair of governors is well informed and the governors as a whole have effective monitoring systems. They support the school well. The school addresses community cohesion very well within its own community and in the local context. It is well aware that pupils' understanding of the national and international communities is not strong. It has started to improve the latter through links with Kenya and Columbia and through the younger pupils' work on how other children live in different parts of the world. Though contact has been made with a British inner-city school, in order to broaden pupils' horizons, there is no recorded plan or timescale for action.

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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	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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	1
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 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?	1

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Buckland Newton Church of England School, Dorchester DT2 7BY

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school yesterday. We are pleased to tell you that you are getting a good education. A particular thank you to those who had a meeting with us and told us your views, and to the school council, who let us look through the minutes of all their meetings. We think you make an outstanding contribution to keeping your school a good place to be. You behave well and have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy. All the adults in the school look after you exceptionally well and give you very good guidance on how to improve your work. You told us how useful this was. You are making good progress in your work, and doing particularly well in your writing. You also told us how much you enjoy school, and we know the teaching is good.

Your headteacher and staff want to make the school even better, and we are sure they will succeed. We have asked them to improve two things.

- Your writing has got much better, but there are still a few areas where we think you could be learning faster. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 need to be helped to improve their reading a bit more quickly. Those in Years 3, 4 and 5 could learn a bit faster in mathematics. You can do your bit to help by working as hard as you can in all subjects.
- In Britain today, particularly in the cities, there are people from many different backgrounds. We have asked the school to improve your understanding of how other people in Britain live.

With best wishes

Deborah Zachary

Lead inspector