

# Piddle Valley Church of England First School

## Inspection report

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113811
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	325890
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Burghart

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	84
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	7
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Webb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Melanie Cridland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Piddletrenthide Dorchester DT2 7QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01300 348219
<b>Fax number</b>	01300 348887

<b>Age group</b>	4–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and, in doing so, investigated the following issues:

how well pupils achieve in mathematics

the standards reached at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the impact this has on progress throughout the school

the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation

the quality and success of academic guidance available to pupils.

Discussions took place with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own views, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a small first school serving a wide rural area. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average but varies from 30% in one year group to 10% in another. Children start school part time in the year in which they are five as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS). They are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils.

All children have been to some form of pre-school setting; most have attended the group which is privately run on the school site.

## 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. It has the overwhelming support of parents. 'A fabulous environment for our children to learn in and a wonderful beacon in the community', was just one of the many positive parental comments. Pupils are happy and staff morale is high. Because of the vision and determined leadership of the headteacher, there is clear educational direction, pupils are well cared for, and the school maintains strong links with parents and the local community.

The newly established management system, where teachers take active responsibility for subjects, is working well. It ensures that staff are involved in the school's overall management. Together with governors, they make an excellent team which is having a marked impact on improving pupils' progress, as well as guaranteeing high-quality pastoral and physical care. For example, detailed analysis of the reasons for lower than average standards in writing in 2006/7 led to changes in planning and modifications to teaching styles. As a result, writing standards are now significantly above average at the end of Year 2 and, although still average at the end of Year 4, the future looks bright. Across the school, standards are above average in reading, and average in mathematics. The school has identified that pupils' skills in problem solving need to be improved and this is the central focus of the current school development plan. However, the school met its numeracy targets so this is only a relative weakness. Nevertheless, ensuring that pupils do as well in mathematics as they do in other subjects is an area for improvement.

With the exception of some elements of communication, language and literacy, which are below expectations, children start school with skills and experience which are broadly as expected nationally. Despite variations between year groups, where small numbers mean that the performance of one or two pupils can have a huge impact on statistics, it is clear that pupils achieve well and make good progress overall. This starts in the EYFS where good provision and sensitive care successfully encourage children to learn 'hands on' and continues in Years 1 to 4. Pupils are well prepared for the middle school not only in terms of basic skills but because their personal development is good. Excellent relationships and the strong commitment to being considerate are very successfully rooted in Christian ideals and the work towards the Rights Respecting School award. Pupils know they will be listened to. In turn, they play their part by being prepared to listen. Their attitudes, behaviour and enjoyment of school are outstanding. Attendance, which was a cause for concern 18 months ago, has been significantly improved to above average through better monitoring procedures. Really strong features of personal development are pupils' awareness of how to keep healthy, their growing independence, and their capacity to work successfully with others.

The quality of teaching is good and this includes the very positive contribution of teaching assistants. They support not only those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but also the learning and enjoyment of pupils in general. A highlight of teaching, which has a substantial effect on pupils' learning throughout the school, is the way staff question and engage pupils to require them to reason and then explain their answers. Teachers plan work which is designed to be enjoyable whilst challenging pupils of all abilities to do their best and build progressively on what they know and can already do. The curriculum on offer is of good quality, being broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' needs. Planning identifies learning objectives. Staff make these clear to pupils at the start of all lessons and refer back to them at the end to reinforce what has been learnt.

Assessment of pupils' progress and the standards reached are securely based on good procedures and effective evaluation. Pupils are actively encouraged to consider how well they are doing, for example as a result of new marking procedures. However, opportunities are missed to set targets for individuals. There are examples of good practice, especially in literacy, but such targets are inconsistently applied across the school in mathematics with the result that pupils have made less progress in this subject. Addressing this already forms part of the school's own development planning.

Although the school has been too cautious in grading its own performance, self evaluation is effective. Leaders and managers are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and ensure that improvements continue to be made. Unsurprisingly parents, staff, governors and pupils are convinced that this is a good school. The positive impact of self-analysis and good governance can be seen in improvements to pupils' progress, rising standards, and the good quality of strategic management. Together with a powerful commitment to be even better, these strengths are at the heart of the school's good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children are given a good start to their education. They make good progress because they are well taught and cared for. Good leadership and management and excellent teamwork amongst staff ensure that activities are well planned. Children's performance is effectively assessed and their needs are successfully catered for. Although there are variations year on year with small year groups, standards at the end of the EYFS are consistently at least average. There are strengths in children's knowledge and understanding of the world and in outstanding personal, social and emotional development. Children grow in independence and learn how to make choices. They relate well to others at work and play, being considerate, sharing and taking their turn. Standards in mathematical development are average but, despite good progress, communication, language and literacy skills are below average at the start of Year 1. This reflects lower starting points in these aspects. Children are being given a sound basis for learning to read and write. Outstanding relationships and a strong sense of belonging underpin the school's caring ethos. Children are happy and enthusiastic and their behaviour is excellent. Parents are extremely pleased with the way the school supports their children. Comments like, 'We feel very lucky that we have such a great school for our children to start their education!' are typical of parents' views.

Indoor provision in terms of space and resources is good. However, the outdoor dedicated area is too small and, although staff work hard to compensate, this restricts children's learning opportunities in physical and creative development.

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

- Improve problem-solving skills to enable pupils to do as well in mathematics as they do in reading and writing.
- Make better use of assessment information to set targets for individual pupils and show them how they can make improvements.



## 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

### 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?	1
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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

Dear Children

Inspection of Piddle Valley Church of England First School, Dorchester DT2 7QL

I know some of you will need help in reading this letter but I think your teachers will make sure you get the message that yours is a good school!

Thank you for your very warm welcome. We could see how much you care about Piddle Valley and how much you enjoy coming to school. A special 'thank you' to your school councillors. They are what adults would call 'good ambassadors' and were keen to tell us about your school.

Here are some of the highlights.

- You get off to a good start in the Robins class.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are better than in most schools in reading and writing, with big improvements in the last year.
- You are well prepared for the middle school because you are well taught.
- You are being helped to grow up as caring, sensible young people.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you certainly know how to keep healthy.
- Staff take good care of you.
- The school is well run.

The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear picture of what is working well and how improvements can be made, for example they already know that the outdoor learning area for Robins class is too small. In order to make the school even better this is what we have asked them to do.

- Make sure you do as well in maths as you do in reading and writing by helping you with problem solving.
- Make your own targets clear so you can see how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work.

You can play your part by continuing to try your best. Good wishes for the future. Yours faithfully

Mike Burghart Lead inspector