

Down Ampney Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115664
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326245
Inspection dates	12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Julia Coop

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Baillie
Headteacher	Mrs C Martin
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	May 2006
School address	Down Ampney
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. A group of pupils also showed inspectors around the school. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Seven parental questionnaires were returned and scrutinised by the inspection team, who also spoke with a number of parents to seek their views about the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in developing independent learning and communication skills.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan activities matched to pupils' different abilities.
- How well teachers maximise progress, particularly for more able pupils in Key Stage 1 and especially in writing, and for middle ability pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly in science.
- How well key skills, particularly writing skills, are developed within subjects across the curriculum.
- The impact of leadership and management on improving provision and outcomes and promoting all strands in community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average two-class village primary school. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of the pupils do not speak English when they start in the school. The current proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average, but this varies each year. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided in the Key Stage 1 class that includes Year 1 and 2 pupils. The school has close links with a pre-school located in the school grounds; this is not managed by the governing body and has been inspected separately. Pupils are taught by four part-time teachers. The headteacher also has a part-time teaching commitment. There have been significant staff changes in recent years; in addition, longer-term maternity leave has resulted in the employment of temporary staff. Recently the youngest pupils were taught in the school hall whilst urgent repairs were undertaken to their classroom.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school's mission statement, 'Work Hard, Have Faith, Be Happy, Stay Safe Together', devised by the pupils themselves, precisely reflects the school's friendly and extremely caring and supportive learning environment. It also reflects the pupils' positive attitudes to school, good personal development and their exceptional contribution to the school and village community. The school's good and improving performance is not only due to the clear and determined leadership of the headteacher and hard-working and enthusiastic team of staff, but also to the pupils' good work ethic, which stems from a strong Christian ethos.

Since the last inspection, despite staff changes and other disruptions, there has been a trend of rising standards at the end of Year 6. In relation to their very varied starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils now achieve well. By the end of Year 6 their attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average. This is because teaching is now good, with some outstanding practice that is driving learning forward. There are common strengths in teaching. Lessons are fun and all staff have good relationships with the pupils. Some teachers are very adept in probing and consolidating pupils' understanding in lessons through well-directed questioning. They expertly judge when to provide additional challenge to the most able pupils and frequently check on pupils' understanding by checking their work regularly. However, the rate of progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1, especially for the most able, is not as consistent as in the rest of the school. There is more still to do to ensure that activities planned are consistently challenging and pupils are helped to understand what they need to do to improve their work. Reception children are making good progress and confidently work alongside the older pupils, although currently opportunities for them to make the choice to work outside and further develop independent learning skills are more limited.

Subject leaders and governors have also developed their roles well since the last inspection. This is vitally important in a small school where the headteacher has a teaching commitment and the part-time staff hold several posts of responsibility. Governors and leaders have high aspirations for the school, work closely with other schools and have set a precise path for improvement based on accurate and candid self-evaluation. As a result, there is awareness that in order to nurture skills that lift pupils' achievement further, more opportunities are required for them to develop extended writing skills and also build scientific investigative skills. In addition, the school recognises that older pupils could be helped even more to develop the

necessary skills to evaluate their own learning, particularly in mathematics.

The history of improvement, together with the culture of shared responsibility and the school's increasingly robust practices, shows that the school is well placed to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress from satisfactory to good in Key Stage 1 by:
 - ensuring that teaching activities consistently challenge the most able pupils
 - making sure that all pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve through marking and talking with teachers
 - ensuring questions are used consistently to probe and extend pupils' learning during and at the end of lessons
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write in their own words in other subjects.

- Promote excellence in learning, particularly in writing and in science in Key Stage 2, by:
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to plan and undertake their own science investigations, recording findings in their own words
 - ensuring pupils have wider opportunities to perfect and extend their writing skills in other subjects
 - developing even more precise individual learning targets that can be used by pupils to improve their work, particularly in mathematics
 - helping pupils develop skills of self-assessment through regular opportunities to review their own work in lessons.

- Extend opportunities for children in the Reception class to learn independently particularly through increased outdoor learning opportunities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils' enthusiastic application to work in lessons observed makes an important contribution to their good achievement. They are flexible learners not thrown by changes to routines. For example, during the inspection some pupils were sitting national tests and assessments for part of the day, which meant a different timetable. Despite this, pupils adapted to the changed routine and only required small reminders to keep concentrating on the task in hand. The school is a harmonious community and the safe, nurturing environment enables vulnerable pupils, such as those with troubled lives or those new to learning English, to build confidence and make good progress. An impressive feature is the way that pupils look out for each other and especially their friends with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from different cultural backgrounds.

Pupils are highly effective ambassadors for the school and have a wide range of forums in which to make an excellent contribution to the school and local community. This includes work experience in the pre-school, involvement in the

village gardening club, and caring for the younger pupils at play or around school.

Evidence from pupils' work in books shows good progress is typical for most pupils. This was confirmed in lessons observed, where pupils mainly made good progress. Sometimes learning was excellent. In the very best lessons observed the pupils were highly involved in learning. Perceptive questioning and practical activities really challenged their thinking. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, for example, Year 5 pupils made exceptional progress in understanding the concept of negative and positive numbers. Through the teacher's probing questioning and by their 100% involvement in an imaginative practical game, pupils said that they had been helped to 'learn difficult stuff in a fun way'.

Improved identification and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has led to these pupils making better progress than in past years. The school is also effective in helping pupils who arrive without speaking English to make good progress in developing speaking and comprehension skills. In addition, middle ability pupils are being helped to reach their challenging targets across the school and especially in science in Key Stage 2, where specialist teaching is helping them to extend their skills. However, in general, pupils' investigative skills are a weaker aspect of learning in science. The main reason why learning is sometimes more satisfactory than good in Key Stage 1 is because class teachers are not as confident to plan more challenging activities for the most able pupils and do not use questioning to extend their learning.

Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to lead a fit and healthy life, although a few pupils recognise they find it hard to maintain a healthy diet. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultures and reflect carefully on those who are less fortunate than themselves. Through their productive links with a school in the Czech Republic they are gaining a good understanding of the wider world, although their understanding of different faith groups is not quite as strong.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2
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How effective is the provision?

The foundation for good achievement is an improved and interesting curriculum and the teaching that encourages pupils to work hard and do their best. Good professional development opportunities and productive partnerships with other small schools have helped new teachers effectively develop their skills and helped enrich the curriculum. As a result, teachers have become more adept at planning for the wide range of ages and abilities in each of the two classes. Teachers also expect pupils to complete a good range and quantity of work, especially in Years 5 and 6, where work is substantial, of high quality and progress most rapid.

At the heart of the curriculum, teaching and learning is the development of pupils' key skills within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This is aided by the careful analysis of data to identify where extra support is needed or pinpoint where skills need to be developed. Dividing the Key Stage 2 class into two teaching groups for English and mathematics is successfully increasing achievement for all groups of pupils. Across the school, teachers have also successfully identified a number of opportunities for pupils to write in different styles in other subjects. However, this opportunity for pupils to hone their writing skills is restricted by the overuse of writing frames, which limits personal creativity and flair. Teachers have also introduced more practical approaches to helping pupils progressively develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, whilst investigation is a common feature in science, this is too often teacher directed and investigation planning frames restrict opportunities for pupils to explore and reason like 'young scientists'.

Opportunities to discuss ideas with others and a good balance between class, group and individual work are common strengths in teaching. The school has introduced curriculum targets for pupils and this is helping them to recognise in general terms what they need to work on. Pupils like these targets but occasionally do not understand them, such as those in mathematics where words used such as 'derive' confuse pupils. Some marking is perceptive and promotes a discussion with pupils, who are then very clear about how they can improve. But this is not consistent and the school recognises that strategies to sharpen pupils' knowledge of their own learning could be enhanced further.

Pastoral care, support and guidance is outstanding and pupils say how very much they appreciate the kindness of staff. Individual pupils receive expert professional help and high quality support from a very wide variety of agencies. Pupils' remark positively about opportunities for them to make visits out of school, and the range of additional activities, such as knitting, mini enterprise schemes, French and sporting activities, is impressive for a small school. By the time they reach Year 6, whilst sad to leave this happy school, all pupils are very successfully guided and prepared to transfer to the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher sets the tone for the effective teamwork and the shared ambition for further success that permeates the school. The school knows its good points but equally knows what it needs to do to improve further. The strategic plan for improvement is a perceptive and detailed document that establishes an effective foundation for furthering the school improvement journey. The school has already introduced initiatives which have begun to improve progress in science and writing and further enhance the quality of teaching. The inclusion and safety of pupils is given a high priority so that pupils achieve well whatever their backgrounds. Procedures for safeguarding are monitored carefully. The governing body ensures that it is well informed so that it can be both supportive and challenging. Staff and governors keep a close check on the possible impact of their actions on community cohesion, but strategic planning to meet this duty, particularly to further establishing links with different faith groups, is currently being developed by the governing body.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a smooth transition into Reception, aided by close links with the pre-school. Adults provide a safe environment which children learn to use with confidence and enjoyment. Progress in communication, language and literacy, a previously weaker area of teaching and learning, is improving. This is the result of the more effective teaching of letters and sounds and through encouraging the children's social and communication skills in more interesting ways. This means that although some children start school with limited communication skills for their age, they are quickly making up for lost ground. Children benefit from the good example

set by older pupils and clear expectations from their teachers and teaching assistant. Teaching and learning are good, and during the inspection, children were observed enjoying identifying which three-dimensional shapes can 'roll' or 'not roll'. From their different starting points most children reach expected levels, and a few more able children exceed them.

Planning for indoor learning is good, especially for the teaching of key skills, but there are missed opportunities to link indoor and outdoor learning. For example, currently, the 'Garden Centre' is the theme for role play indoors, but this is not mirrored in the outdoor learning. The children still tend to regard the outdoor area as a place to play rather than as also a place to work. On occasions there is an overemphasis on adult-led activities and this restricts their independence. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Recent changes in staffing have been positive and build on much stronger identification of areas of underperformance and positive action to address these.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The rate of response of the questionnaires to inspectors is below the usual number for this size of school. Inspectors, however, spoke to several parents, who were all very happy with the school and particularly value the small class and how well staff know their children. There were no particular trends in the very small number of written criticisms received by inspectors.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Down Ampney to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children. The inspection team received 7 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 42 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	2	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007–8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007–8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007–8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007–8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



13 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Down Ampney Church of England Primary School, Down Ampney GL7 5QR

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Thank you also to those of you who talked to us about your school and showed us around the school. You are lucky to have such an extensive range of visits and visitors that help make your learning enjoyable. We agree with you that you go to a good school.

You make an impressive contribution to the school and local community. This is because everyone at the school takes very good care of you. As a result, you are confident and we know that the Year 6 pupils are being helped very successfully for the move to your new bigger schools in September. You all have good relationships with your teachers, who encourage you to try hard and make good progress. You enjoy learning, particularly when activities are practical and challenging. We were impressed with the way that you look out for each other. The headteacher, governors and other staff work as a team to make your school successful. We have asked them to work on a few things to make your school an even better place to learn:

- In Year 1 and 2, make sure that work is not too easy for some of you and teachers help you to improve your work.
- Make your learning excellent in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that you are helped to review your own learning, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure that older pupils have more opportunities to plan and undertake investigations in science.
- Plan more opportunities for you to write at length in other subjects.
- Make sure that Reception children have wider opportunities to learn and develop when they work outside.

I hope you go on trying hard and enjoying all of the interesting activities which help you learn so well.

Yours faithfully

Julia Coop (Lead inspector)

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