

Wedmore First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123716
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327971
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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)	213
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 local authority
Headteacher	Jackie Hipwell
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackford Road Wedmore BS28 4BS
Telephone number	01934 712643
Fax number	01934 713586

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of strategies to improve achievement in mathematics
- the way in which targets are used and pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve
- the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in different class settings.

Evidence was gathered from observations in lessons and around the school, scrutiny of pupils' work and of records on their progress and a range of documentation. Parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school serving a widespread rural area. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number coming from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than is normally found. Numbers in each year group vary considerably and so class organisation changes to accommodate the variation. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are currently taught in two classes. One is for Reception children only and the other also includes Year 1 pupils. There has been some disruption to leadership arrangements over the past year, due to the serious illness of the headteacher. The school has been led by two senior teachers who took on roles as acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. The substantive headteacher is now back in post.

During term time, there is a breakfast club and an after school club on site that are run independently of the school. The provider of these clubs also offers full day care during school holidays.

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 some outstanding features, particularly in relation to pupils' personal development. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Pupils are cared for well in a positive ethos and parents are extremely complimentary about this. Typical parental comments include 'there is a real sense of community spirit in the school' and 'children are well supported by all the teachers with their emotional and social needs'.

From having skills and knowledge in line with expectations for their age on starting school, children make good progress in the Reception Year. This is successfully built on in Years 1 and 2 so that by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Until recently, progress in Years 3 and 4 had been erratic and pupils have not always made the gains that they should. However, tracking systems have been strengthened and expectations raised so that this weakness has been successfully addressed. Teaching is now good throughout the school and good progress is being sustained in Years 3 and 4. Standards at the end of Year 4 are above average overall and pupils are achieving well but there is some variation between subjects. Pupils do exceptionally well in reading and generally make good progress in writing. Gains in mathematics, while satisfactory, are not as good as in reading and writing. This subject is a current priority for improvement and there are good indications that pupils' progress is accelerating.

The progress of individual pupils is systematically tracked and regularly reviewed by senior leaders and class teachers. This enables the school to quickly identify any pupils not making the gains that they should so that extra support can be provided where appropriate. However, the information gained is not always summarised and analysed to identify whether all groups are doing equally well. The school identified last year that there were some differences in the performance of boys and girls in the statutory assessments at the end of Year 2 as girls did better in writing than boys. However, there has been no extension of this analysis to check whether there are also differences in the attainment of girls and boys in other year groups. Because of this, the school is not always in a position to pick up on emerging issues, and make adjustments to the curriculum to address these. The school is setting challenging whole school targets and has introduced targets for individual pupils. Pupils know they have targets to help them to improve, but are not always clear what these are or what they mean. Marking of work rarely refers to targets or to pupils' progress towards these.

Senior staff, with strong support from governors, have worked well as a team through this year to maintain the school's successes under temporary leadership arrangements. The school is well placed to make further improvements. Systems for monitoring and evaluation have been sharpened so that lesson observations, for example, are clearly focused and helpful points for development are identified. Key subject leaders, some of whom are fairly new in post, are beginning to have an impact in leading developments in the areas for which they are responsible. They have had limited opportunities to check on the impact of the work that they have done, but there are plans to extend their role in collating data and observing lessons.

Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about school. They benefit from a good curriculum, particularly the excellent range of opportunities they have to participate in clubs, visits and community events. They contribute their ideas for developments through the school council and have been consulted about key initiatives, for example the formulation of the school vision. Their own version of this illustrates their maturity in reflecting on and articulating their responsibilities

to each other - 'We are all about having fun and joining in, listening to one another and looking after each other.' Pupils have an excellent awareness of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise and of the need to stay safe and look after each other. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils in different year groups mix well together. Attendance has improved and is now good. The school works closely with other agencies to support the few families where there are concerns about children's attendance or punctuality.

The school plays an active part in a wide range of community events such as Wedmore in Bloom. There are excellent links with other local schools so that pupils can participate in a range of sporting activities. Liaison with the receiving middle schools is good so that Year 4 pupils are involved in joint projects and activities. An excellent example is the recent 'French café' run in conjunction with Year 7 students. Pupils' global awareness is good but their understanding of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom is relatively weak. The school has plans to address this through extending links with schools in contrasting areas.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year and their learning and development is good. By the time they move on to Year 1, the majority attain above average levels in almost all areas. They do exceptionally well in their personal development and are extremely well prepared for their next stage in their learning. By contrast they do not do quite as well in writing, where standards are broadly average rather than above. The curriculum has been adjusted to provide more opportunities for writing and there are indications of improvements for the current cohort.

Children benefit from a well structured induction programme that ensures that they settle quickly into school life. A high degree of attention is paid to their care and welfare and parents are given good information on their progress. As one commented: 'The staff are friendly and willing to listen to any worries; the children are encouraged to learn and my daughter comes home almost daily with news of their activities.' Children rapidly gain confidence and the vast majority work and play happily together, understanding the need to share equipment and take turns.

Strong leadership ensures that staff work closely together and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Those children in the straight Reception class have ready access to a well equipped outdoor learning area. Children in the class with Year 1 pupils use this area on a weekly basis and also have opportunities to use a smaller outdoor area adjacent to their own classroom. There is no identifiable difference in the progress that children in the two classes make and school makes every effort to overcome the potential difficulties of Reception children being in two classes that are some distance apart. Plans are in hand to reorganise classes next year to enable greater flexibility in the way that the indoor and outdoor environments can be accessed by all Reception children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the analysis of assessment data to check whether all groups are doing equally well in year groups throughout the school so that any emerging trends can be quickly identified and addressed.
- Implement a consistent approach to setting targets and ensure that each pupil is aware of what they need to do to improve and that marking informs them of how well they doing in relation to their targets.

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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?	1
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 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?	1
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	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	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?	2

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	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**

8 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wedmore First School, Wedmore, BS28 4BS

You may remember that two of us visited recently to see how you are getting on at school. Thanks to all of you who explained to us what you were doing in lessons and the sorts of activities in which you get involved. I thought you might be interested in what we are saying in our report. We decided that yours is a good school with some aspects that are outstanding.

One of the best things about it is the way that you become so mature and responsible. You thoroughly enjoy school, your behaviour is excellent and you take good care of each other. You know how important it is to keep healthy and stay safe. You take part in lots of clubs and sporting activities with other schools and enjoy visits to places like London.

You are taught well and this means that you make good progress with your learning. By the time that you move on to middle school, you have very good skills in reading. The school is working to make sure that you do just as well in mathematics and we could see that you are making quicker progress in this subject.

Staff take good care of you and make sure that you get extra help if you need it. They are working hard with the governors to make the school even better. We were very impressed with the work of the school council and the eco-council in putting forward ideas and supporting improvements in school and the locality.

- We have suggested two things that need to be done now.
- Make use of all the information on your progress to check whether everyone is doing equally well in each year group.
- Give you targets in English as well as in mathematics, so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve and make sure that, when your work is marked, you are told how you are doing with your targets.

You can help by working hard towards those targets!

Yours faithfully

Shirley Billington

Lead inspector