

Wells Central CofE Junior School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 123777 |
| Local Authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 327983 |
| Inspection dates | 3–4 February 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jane Neech |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 238 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Gill Baker |
| Headteacher | Steve Turner |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 June 2006 |
| School address | Keward Avenue Wells BA5 1TS |
| Telephone number | 01749 678066 |
| Fax number | 01749 670598 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wells Central Church of England Junior School is an average sized school where few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently one quarter of the school population, which is above the national average. These include pupils who have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural and social problems. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and none is at an early stage of English language acquisition. Most pupils transfer into the school from St Cuthbert's Infant School. The school has a Healthy Schools Award, Sportsmark and Eco Bronze Award. An after-school club, run by the school, was opened in February 2008 and inspected in June 2008.

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

Wells Central Church of England Junior School is a good and improving school, providing a stimulating environment for learning. The school quite rightly feels proud of the route it has taken over the last few years. It has good links with parents, the church and the local community. Pupils receive outstanding pastoral support. Parents praise the school for the care new pupils receive when they arrive in Year 3. As one parent wrote, 'My daughter's confidence has grown amazingly in just a few short months since she started at school.'

Pupils thrive personally and academically in this encouraging environment. Their good personal development and well-being are particularly evident in house team meetings and assemblies, where the whole school celebrates examples of initiative and positive behaviour. Pupils' positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their good progress across the school.

Pupils enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment but these may vary considerably from year to year. Transition arrangements from the feeder infant school are good and the school continues to develop the whole child, quickly putting in place interventions where necessary. As a result, by the time the pupils leave in Year 6, they have met or exceeded targets set. The more-able pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science. Taking into consideration their variable starting points in Year 3, pupils progress well. Comprehensive tracking and analysis are securely in place, and this is having a positive impact on achievement by ensuring a rigorous approach to lesson planning. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling them to make good progress.

Teaching and learning are good and typically feature effective use of challenge and praise. However, the quality of teaching is not consistent across the school and some lessons lose pace, leading to pupils becoming restless. Good examples of effective marking give pupils a clear understanding of the next steps they need to take to improve their work, but this is also not consistent across the school. The curriculum is inclusive, well planned, varied and interesting with strong opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development and skills through activities such as the school farm and Forest School activities. There is a wide range of clubs and the take-up from pupils is high, as is the level of enjoyment. Residential visits are well supported and enjoyed by pupils. Most pupils can talk about how they are doing and they know how their targets link together to move them to the next level.

Leadership and management are good, with a positive and well thought out approach to school improvement. The school has accurately evaluated its strengths and weaknesses, focusing appropriately on the areas for improvement. The leadership team monitors performance well, leading to a clear view of the standards and progress made by pupils. The headteacher demonstrates a high level of care for the whole school community. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and hold it to account well. The school has made good progress since its last inspection. It has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop consistently good practice in teaching, building on the strengths that already exist across the school, so that all pupils are challenged to do as well as they possibly can.
- Improve the consistency of marking so that all pupils understand the next steps in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement overall is good. Standards have been rising over the last few years. Results in statutory assessment tests in 2007 in English were significantly above national averages, placing the school's performance in the top third nationally. In the 2008 statutory assessment, pupils reached standards in English, mathematics and science broadly in line with national averages. Results at the higher level for all three subjects were above national expectations. Pupils, including higher attainers, exceeded targets set for English and science. Higher attainers exceeded targets set for mathematics. This represents good progress, given the mobility during Key Stage 2 resulting in significant changes in the year group. Girls outperform boys in English. Through pupil questionnaires and consultation with parents, the school has investigated boys' attitudes to reading. Regular tracking shows new strategies are having a positive impact on standards achieved. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from effective support and make good progress.

The scrutiny of work, as part of the inspection, showed that the current Year 6 are on track to meet their challenging targets. A significant number are already working at the expected levels in English and mathematics with examples of work at the higher level, particularly in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and a high number take part in the wide choice of extra-curricular activities. Attendance is good. Relationships are good so that pupils behave well in and around the school. They show respect for each other in lessons through their willing support and collaboration. There is a good level of supervision at playtimes making pupils feel safe, because they know they are well looked after in a secure environment. Staff listen to pupils if they have difficulties or concerns. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly. Pupils speak positively about the 'worry box' in which they can share their concerns with an adult anonymously. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultures, demonstrated in an assembly led by a class of Year 5/6 pupils, where pupils shared greetings in different languages and performed a number of traditional dances and songs. However, opportunities for reflection and appreciation of the wonders of the world are more limited.

The school has successfully gained a Healthy Schools award. Pupils grow their own vegetables and have good knowledge of healthy diets and the need for regular exercise. The school and local community benefit from the good contribution pupils make. House captains and members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and are fully involved in the running of the school. Currently the school council is involved in a project to develop the adventure play area. House captains lead house assemblies, demonstrating a mature level of responsibility. In the wider community pupils are learning about their counterparts in another country through close links with a school in Uganda. Pupils are acquiring a range of good basic skills through their charity work that will equip them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to plan challenging lessons for pupils. Careful questioning by teachers and teaching assistants enables pupils of all abilities to participate in lessons and work on activities appropriate to their abilities. Sharing of objectives with the pupils has improved their understanding of the learning in lessons and their good attitudes reinforce the progress made. Teachers' classroom management is generally good but sometimes the pace of a lesson can slow and as a result some pupils can lose interest. Work on teachers' use of assessment information to guide planning and set targets for pupils is having a clear impact on achievement. There is now effective intervention to improve progress for individuals who are underachieving. Teaching assistants support pupils well, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers ensure that the contribution to lessons of this group of learners is shared and celebrated. Marking is generally praising and encouraging. Staff use the complex marking codes but they are not consistently applied. Overall, marking does not routinely help pupils to understand the next steps they need to take in order to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum encourages the pupils' personal development well. It is broad and balanced and enhanced by an excellent range of enrichment activities including visits, residential camps and visitors to the school. The school has an effective four-year curriculum, which ensures that pupils have coherent learning programmes which prepare them well for their adult lives. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and there is a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The exceptional range of enrichment activities is a strength of the school. Particular favourites are the Forest School activities, the school farm and the sports, music, dance, drama and art activities. Pupils enjoy enrichment weeks where they are encouraged to extend their learning through practical activities. The recent opportunities for pupils to work alongside their parents are proving to be a great success. Pupils share and celebrate their work through displays and assemblies. The standard of work displayed, including effective use of ICT skills, is good, often posing questions to draw a response from the viewer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The 'green room' provides a secure and encouraging environment where skilled support is available for individual pupils. A number of programmes are available to develop pupils' social skills and raise their self-esteem. There are outstanding strategies to support pupils who find school life difficult. The school works well with outside agencies to support individual children and their families. The Parent and Family Support Service in particular have an ongoing regular partnership with the school. The school takes an individual approach to caring for its pupils and this is appreciated and valued by parents. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet government requirements.

As a result of excellent teamwork by experienced staff, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support and as a result make good progress in their learning. Academic guidance is rigorous and progress carefully monitored. Challenging targets are set although some of these could be even higher to stretch all pupils. Most pupils know that their targets help them to improve their work. School systems to track progress are used well by subject leaders. These target individuals and groups in danger of underachieving, and regular meetings between the headteacher and class teachers ensure that, where appropriate, interventions are put in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leaders provide a clear direction to its work, and this is resulting in improving standards and achievement. The leadership team's accurate evaluation of the school's work identifies priorities leading to action such as strategies to enthuse boys' reading. The school looks after its pupils very well and is proactive in ensuring that the personal development and well-being of all pupils are a high priority. Staff appreciate the opportunity to meet monthly with the headteacher and talk about pupils who are identified as being vulnerable to falling behind in their learning. This has made a difference in creating a stronger whole-school focus on pupils' progress and ensuring teachers are accountable. Consistent practice across the school is being developed through peer observation and coaching. Accurate self-evaluation leads to well considered and effective whole-school improvement planning, based on the needs of all pupils, involving the views of governors and staff. The school listens to its pupils and parents well and takes decisive action to support the parent partnership, such as the setting up of Forest School activities. Community cohesion is promoted well through maximising opportunities in the curriculum to engage with the local area, such as the setting up of the school farm involving local charities.

Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge. As one governor put it, 'We want children to have a future.' The governing body evaluates the performance of the school closely and has an effective structure with clearly defined roles focused on promoting school improvement. Governors' induction is good. They play a full part in the life of the school and hold it to account well.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

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/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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 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 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

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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 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**

5 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wells Central CofE Junior School, Wells, BA5 1TS

I am writing to thank you for making the inspection team feel so welcome in your school when we visited recently and for helping us with our questions. We really enjoyed talking to you and thought that everything that you said was very interesting. I thought you would like to know what we found out about you and the school.

We agree with you and your parents that your school is getting better all the time and is a good school. Here are some of the things that we liked about Wells Central.

- You enjoy school and learn well.
- You work well with each other and the adults in the school.
- Your house assemblies show how you take responsibility and are helpful to each other.
- All the adults help you settle well when you are new to the school.
- Your teachers work hard to help you to learn and make your lessons interesting.
- Your headteacher makes sure that you are cared for very well.
- All the staff work well together to keep you safe and healthy so you feel confident in all that you do.
- Many of you enjoy a range of clubs and exciting activities such as the Forest School, the school farm and sports, art and music activities.
- The governors are working hard to make the school even better.

We have asked your teachers to work on two things so that you can make even more progress in your learning. We think that your teachers should make sure that they share their good practice with each other in order to make your lessons even better. We have also asked that they mark your work consistently well, so that you always know how to improve and move on in your learning.

You can also help to improve your school even more by continuing to work hard and make the most of the opportunities available. I am sure that you will.

Yours faithfully

Jane Neech

Lead inspector