

St Cuthbert's Church of England Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123778
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327984
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Jane Neech

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	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	118
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	Lisa Lunnon
Headteacher	Vicky Flicker
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Keward Walk Wells BA5 1TZ
Telephone number	01749 672591
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Cuthbert's Church of England Infants School is situated on the outskirts of Wells and pupils come from the local community. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Their needs relate mostly to moderate learning difficulties or behavioural and social problems. A playgroup and junior school share 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

'When looking for a school, we chose St Cuthbert's Infants because of its good reputation and have not been disappointed.' 'I feel my daughter has flourished in the time she has attended St Cuthbert's.' 'St Cuthbert's takes account of each individual child's needs and manages to educate, yet nurture at the same time.'

These are the views of parents and they are right! St Cuthbert's is indeed a good school with some outstanding features, where young pupils thrive because of the nurturing environment. All at the school are working exceptionally hard to do the best for the pupils. The school's attention to detail in the way it cares for pupils is second to none. A strong school ethos underpins the inclusive and harmonious community. As a result, the pastoral care pupils receive is of high quality. Regular contact with the adjacent junior school ensures smooth transition arrangements for Year 2 pupils.

Achievement across the school is good. The children get off to a secure start in Reception, where all do well because of good quality teaching and care. This good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and pupils attain above average results in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop very good social skills and attitudes because of effective and sensitive support that is carefully matched to their needs. Whilst pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, the school is aware that it is not yet doing enough to compare their overall academic achievement to national expectations, to ensure all pupils in this group do as well as they can.

'My children are kept stimulated and eager to learn.' 'The teachers and support staff are very caring and encouraging.' These parental comments are a fitting tribute to the lively teaching and learning across the school. Lessons are well planned, and taught in an interesting manner, such as the use of a puppet as the 'teacher'. Consequently, the pupils respond enthusiastically, concentrate well and work hard.

Parents report that their children enjoy the variety of opportunity offered through the curriculum. For example: 'I love the variety of education and the themes, for example Chinese New Year and Hawaiian Christmas.' Every effort is made to provide the pupils with practical, motivating experiences that stimulate their enjoyment of learning. Pupils' artwork is a joy to see and displays the learning that is taking place across different areas, such as history in Key Stage 1 and knowledge and understanding of the world in the Reception classes. The school works well with the local community and there is a wide range of visits and clubs on offer, which the pupils, parents and carers appreciate. Parents are particularly appreciative of the musical opportunities offered to pupils, such as the work with local choristers leading to a singing performance in Wells Cathedral.

Parents like the way the headteacher knows all the pupils and their families. New parents praise the induction evening; it is welcoming and friendly and sets clear expectations. It is because of these expectations that pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In this smallish school, leaders and managers 'wear many hats' and this leads to a seamless approach to sharing expertise. The school sets realistic targets to improve and there is no room for complacency. The school is quite rightly pleased with its success in tackling the issues identified for improvement in the last inspection, as reflected in the improved standards in writing in Key Stage 1 statutory assessment tests. Partnership between the school and its effective governors is strong. The school has correctly recognised that it does not make sharp enough use of national benchmarking

data for school performance, and as a result, expectations are not as high as they could be for some pupils. However, the school's track record of improvement, coupled with good self-evaluation practices, means that it has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a happy start to school life and they progress well. This is because teaching is good and children are well looked after by all the adults in the staff team. Careful observations by staff track children's development. This helps teachers plan activities that match children's interests and provide a suitable range of learning experiences. Activities are interesting and fun; for example, solid shape recognition was being taught during the inspection through a guessing game. The school recognises the success of such activities in developing young learners. It is working hard to ensure all activities offered are of equally high quality. The school responds well to those children who need extra help by putting in appropriate support. Parents are full of praise for how the school works closely with families of the youngest children. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator leads the team well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Compare the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with national expectations to ensure they continue to do as well as they can. .
- Ensure that leaders and managers make better use of national benchmarks when judging the school's performance against that of other similar schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's overall skills at the beginning of Reception are broadly in line with the levels expected for their age, although their skills in communication, early writing and calculation are relatively weak. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with average levels of attainment in all areas of learning. In the current Year 2, academic results in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. One parent commented, 'I can really see the progress my daughter has made in reading, writing and maths over the past year.' This is due to the school's increased focus on learning since the last inspection, and making the work more challenging for able pupils. As one teacher put it, 'The children love it because they never finish!' One parent wrote, 'I am staggered by the progress my son has made.' Standards are improving because of good systems of target setting, which involve both pupils and their parents. Pupils can talk about their targets and know that these help them improve their work.

The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory but variable. While quality support programmes have a significant impact on developing young pupils' positive attitudes, the school has recognised that it does not yet compare this group's progress closely enough with national expectations, to ensure they continue to achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strong commitment exhibited by all the adults to the nurturing of the whole child results in pupils thriving and enjoying coming to school. Attendance is consistently good, as is

punctuality. Without exception, children are enthusiastic about school and feel they have a voice. Pupils are particularly proud of their choice of colours and themes for the newly decorated toilets. The school council takes its role seriously and its members are good ambassadors for the school. They are keen to tell visitors what makes their school great, such as the Golden Rules, which they see as very important.

Because the school places a high importance on developing the pupils' confidence, spiritual, social and moral development is good. Pupils benefit from opportunities designed to cultivate these aspects, for example the sensitive collective worship on 'Friends' where the pupils have time to reflect and, as one pupil put it, 'be peaceful'. Cultural development is also good; the pupils enjoy learning French and exploring life in other countries. The school gives pupils the opportunity to apply their skills through involvement in charity fundraising and spending a small amount on classroom resources. While pupils' good basic and social skills ensure that they are well prepared for future life, the school has plans to develop these currently limited opportunities to promote their economic well-being.

Behaviour is exemplary. The pupils move calmly and sensibly around the school and in class and cooperate well as talk partners. Around the school, they say 'hello' to visitors and adults and invariably greet them with friendly smiles. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the importance of eating healthily and participating in exercise. They are involved in deciding the menus for hot meals and the take-up of meals has risen as a result. They feel very safe in school and know there is an adult to turn to if in need. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are few; those that do occur are dealt with promptly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Careful planning of exciting learning tasks, coupled with good relationships throughout the school, ensures that pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. Learning is active in lessons and tailored to meet their individual requirements, such as the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring they take full part in physical education (PE) and drama lessons. The best lessons challenge pupils to investigate and solve problems, for example when solving word problems in mathematics and selecting their own resources as an aid. Teaching assistants make a high quality and significant contribution to the pupils' achievements. Marking and responding to pupils' work helps pupils develop in their learning. The school is working hard to ensure all lessons provide pupils with independent learning opportunities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Every effort is made to provide the pupils with practical, creative experiences, which develop their appetite for learning. Effective use is made of visits, visitors and the local community to enrich the pupils' learning, for example participation in the county dance festival and the Wells in Bloom competition. There is a range of clubs, for example French, sports, musical and science activities, which the pupils value. These are well attended and much appreciated by parents. As one parent put it, 'The school takes advantage of other good local facilities and organisations.' Quality input from external coaches in sports and drama enhances the curriculum. Such provision is making a positive contribution to the development of pupils' enjoyment and confidence. The

school is aware that an area for development is the comparison of pupils' progress against national expectations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

In this nurturing environment, the pastoral care provided for pupils is exceptional and this contributes to the calm atmosphere within the school. Procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are well established. Close links with the playgroup on site and other pre-school providers ensure that the Reception children settle quickly. There are effective links with outside agencies to ensure that pupils' social and emotional needs are met. The school recognises that benchmarking systems to analyse the progress of different groups of pupils against national expectations are not yet fully developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Committed leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by the staff team, is ensuring that the school continues to move forward. There is good delegation of leadership throughout the school; it is particularly strong in literacy and numeracy. All adults receive professional support; as a result, there is a strong team spirit permeating throughout the school. This team spirit extends to parents, who are partners in learning; the school values their views and acts upon them. This is one of the many ways in which the school contributes well to community cohesion.

The school has good systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement, and for evaluating the impact of the resulting actions it takes. Leaders at all levels, including the committed and supportive governors, are working to ensure improvements in standards. Any identified weakness, such as pupils' performance in writing, is tackled energetically and with success. The school is aware it is in the early stages of benchmarking its performance nationally, and recognises that a greater focus on this area of work will aid school expectations for what some pupils could be achieving, particularly pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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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	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?	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	3

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	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

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**

2 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Church of England Infants School, Wells, BA5 1TZ

I am writing to say thank you very much for giving me such a warm welcome during my recent visit to St Cuthbert's. I enjoyed talking with you about your work, hearing about your life at school and chatting to you at lunchtime.

St Cuthbert's is a good school and the way it makes sure you are healthy is outstanding. Here are some of the special things that your school does well:

- Your school looks after you very well and the adults want to do their best for you.
- Your behaviour is very good.
- The youngest children get off to a happy start at school.
- You make good progress in your reading, writing and mathematics and reach above average standards.
- Your teachers plan fun activities for you, which help you to enjoy school.
- The school council take its responsibilities seriously and is doing a splendid job.
- You had great ideas for your colourful toilets!
- There are lots of clubs and visits, which you enjoy.
- You contribute well to the local community.
- You sing beautifully.
- Your headteacher and other adults are always looking for ways to make your school an even better place to be!

You are lucky to have such caring adults looking after you. I have asked them to check more carefully how every one of you is doing in reading, writing and mathematics, to make sure all of you make the best possible progress in your work. To help with this, I would also like your headteacher and governors to make sure they know more about how well different groups of children at St Cuthbert's are doing compared to similar groups in other schools in the country.

It was a real privilege to visit St Cuthbert's Infants School. Keep up the good work and, most importantly, continue to enjoy your learning.

Best wishes for the future

Jane Neech

Lead inspector