

Norton Fitzwarren Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123798
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327991
Inspection date	27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	70
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	Anna Jones
Headteacher	Bernie Dennis
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackdown View Norton Fitzwarren Taunton TA2 6TB
Telephone number	01823 276611
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school. Most children attend from the immediate locality, including families from the military base. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mostly with literacy and numeracy needs and a few with emotional and behavioural needs. There is a high proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time and the numbers on roll since the previous inspection have fallen markedly. The small numbers in each year group means that there is wide variance in the attainment on entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Reception children are taught alongside Year 1 pupils. The school is being led by an acting headteacher and most of the teaching staff have been recently appointed.

There is a pre-school playgroup on the school premises that is not managed by the governing body and is registered by Ofsted.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Norton Fitzwarren is a satisfactory school. Pupils' progress and their achievement are satisfactory. Historically, standards have not been high enough. Action being taken is improving progress, but standards remain below average. In the EYFS, provision is satisfactory and in 2007, the children came into school with skills below those expected. The acting headteacher has rightly identified that further improvement is needed in writing and mathematics and is drawing well on external support to help to do this. Planning for improvement accurately targets key weaknesses.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are a strength of the school. Relationships throughout the school are friendly. Staff set clear expectations about behaviour and are concerned about the welfare of each pupil. As a result, the pupils are confident and feel safe. The curriculum, while satisfactory overall, ensures that pupils' personal and social needs are effectively developed. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. While the care provided is strong, the use of targets in lessons to promote better learning is inconsistent.

Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They say that they have fun working with each other and get a lot of help in their groups. One older pupil commented that 'the building and people who help us make a happy community'. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of being active and the reasons for eating healthy foods. Nearly all parents agree that the school cares well for their children; for example, they say, 'staff are approachable and always available ... there is a super family atmosphere in the school'.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There is a coherent strategy in place to develop pupils' writing, and action taken through adapting the curriculum is beginning to make a difference. However, planning to improve how pupils apply their skills in mathematics is not as advanced. Staff new to the school have settled in well and teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning, and pupils are keen to respond in lessons. However, activities do not always provide sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils. The school is satisfactorily placed to improve. Whilst the acting headteacher provides a strong direction for improvement, self-evaluation and leadership responsibilities are not sufficiently spread across the staff. Consequently, the implementation of change is inconsistent.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The achievement of children in the EYFS is satisfactory. Children make a confident start in the school and settle quickly, helped by the caring staff and older Year 1 pupils who set a good example. The current Reception children have a wide range of skills and there is an above average proportion with particular learning needs. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Children are encouraged to speak in sentences and activities cover all the areas of learning. However, provision for Reception children is not always sufficiently distinct from that for the Year 1 pupils. Children enjoy ball games and riding tricycles on the spacious playground. However, the covered outdoor learning area is underused. The children play sensibly with each other at break times and enjoy eating fruit. Provision is satisfactorily managed. Leaders keep clear records to track the progress of the children but self-evaluation is not sufficiently sharp.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by implementing the strategy for improving writing and by developing pupils' application skills in mathematics.
- Ensure that provision in the EYFS is sufficiently distinct from that for Year 1 and consistently meets the children's needs.
- Make sure that teaching consistently challenges all pupils, particularly the more able.
- Widen and strengthen leadership responsibilities across staff to ensure that improvement is driven through and evaluated more effectively.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

While children make satisfactory progress in the EYFS, standards are generally below average by the time they enter Year 1. In 2008, standards at the end of Year 2 were below average, very similar to those in 2007. However, the 2008 pupils all made satisfactory progress from their starting points at the beginning of Year 1. Year 6 standards in 2007 were below average in English and mathematics because too few pupils reached the higher Level 5. The 2008 performance information for Year 6 shows a broadly similar picture. However, these pupils have met appropriate targets set from their low starting point in Year 3 and a few have exceeded them. In some year groups, the departure of pupils from the school has adversely affected overall attainment. The school's progress information shows that most pupils make satisfactory progress across the school, including those with literacy and numeracy difficulties. Displays throughout the school show high quality artwork.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school and like practical activities in lessons and the wide range of clubs and activities available after school. Most attend regularly. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils listen well and eagerly respond to questions in whole-school assembly. Good social skills and qualities such as self-confidence have been successfully fostered through the curriculum. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Britain is underdeveloped.

Pupils trust adults working with them and are very confident that they can raise any issues or concerns when necessary. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being play helpers. In the EYFS, the Reception children work well with the Year 1 pupils, for example in talking together in pairs. Pupils' understanding about the importance of eating fruit and drinking water regularly is fostered from the EYFS onwards. Pupils enjoy taking exercise, and football is a particular favourite at playtimes. They participate well in the good range of lunchtime activities. They have a strong voice through the school council and contribute to the wider community through charitable work and fundraising.

Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their learning. They take with them positive attitudes to learning and the ability to work in teams. Their growing awareness about

environmental issues is demonstrated through the way they contribute to recycling paper and help to compost food waste.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers provide good role models for pupils, treating them with courtesy and respect. They manage pupils sensitively, and consequently pupils' relationships with adults and with each other are positive. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards effectively to engage the interest of pupils and grab their attention. Pupils work well together in groups, for example when writing a news report. Planning does not always take sufficient account of the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly the more able. This is impeding their progress. Teachers usually start lessons by identifying what is to be learned. However, objectives are not always sufficiently clear or precise enough for the pupils to check on their own learning. Teaching assistants work confidently with individual groups of pupils, especially those who need extra support. However, there are a few occasions, for example in the EYFS, where their skills are insufficiently used to help the children to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Provision for pupils' personal, social and health needs is good and this is helping the pupils develop confident and mature attitudes. Assemblies provide very good opportunities for pupils to reflect on values such as friendship and tolerance. In Reception, there are occasions when children are not encouraged sufficiently to use their initiative and learning is overly directed by adults. Throughout the school, topics are carefully planned and pupils recognise the links that are made between subjects. The school's strategy to develop writing through a greater emphasis on speaking and listening activities is in place but not fully embedded. Leaders recognise that the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning is inconsistent. Opportunities for pupils to extend their learning outside the school day are good. Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of clubs. They say, for example, that they particularly like art and enjoy Reading club because it 'helps and encourages' them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which to learn. Staff are sensitive to the needs of the pupils, including those who might have family members on active service. Children have settled well in the EYFS because of the good induction arrangements. Child protection and e-safety procedures are securely in place. Parents much appreciate the school's caring atmosphere and friendly staff. The school quickly follows up any absence by contacting parents by phone or text. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early and their progress is suitably reviewed. Pupils have appropriate targets for literacy and numeracy. However, these are not being used regularly enough in lessons to help with their learning. Marking to help pupils understand how to improve is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is working well with external support and this is helping to strengthen progress. It is satisfactorily forging links with the local community and making arrangements more cohesive than they were. The acting headteacher has a good understanding of what further improvement is necessary. She has provided a new impetus for change. However, there is more to do to develop a common understanding about what needs to be improved, including in the EYFS. Responsibility for leading subjects is not yet sufficiently distributed amongst staff. The school has suitable procedures in place to evaluate how well it is doing. The acting headteacher has a very clear understanding about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are in place. However, information is yet to be used to its full potential, for example to set yearly targets. Governors are very committed to the school's work and suitably involved in evaluating how well it is doing. Changes in staffing have been supported well, particularly by the chair of governors. This has ensured that the school continues to run smoothly.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils Inspection of Norton Fitzwarren Church of England Primary School, Taunton, TA2 6TB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and were impressed with your friendliness and confidence. The valuable information you gave us was a great help. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and you are making satisfactory progress. The leadership of your school is satisfactory.

What your school does particularly well:

- Leaders and other adults make sure that the school is a happy and welcoming place.
- Most of you enjoy school, have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- The school provides good care and ensures you are safe and secure.
- You all get on well together and with your teachers.
- The curriculum is enriched through clubs, which you enjoy.
- Lessons are usually fun and teachers give you plenty of help.
- Improvements are beginning to help you with your writing.
- Parents support the work of the school well.

We have asked your headteacher and the other adults to do these things:

- Help you all to do well in your writing and develop your problem solving skills in mathematics.
- Improve teaching so that more of you are helped to reach the higher levels.
- Give your teachers and other adults more responsibility to ensure that changes being made are helping you to learn better.
- Make sure that activities provided in EYFS meet those young children's needs.

With your hard work, you can help your school to improve further.

Yours faithfully

Peter Clifton Lead Inspector