

Lympsham Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123810
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327995
Inspection date	7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	83
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	Robert Kail-Dyke
Headteacher	Julie Larter
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rectory Way Lympsham Weston-super-Mare BS24 0EW
Telephone number	01934 750473
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Lympsham Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School is much smaller than average. It has very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The very small Early Years Foundation Stage comprises one Reception class.

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 provides pupils with a fine start to their school careers. All adults work closely together to maximise the benefits of the school's small size because they know all pupils so well. Staff work well to overcome a small school's potential isolation, by building excellent links with other institutions. For example, older pupils' transfer to middle school is eased by a jointly planned curriculum.

The school's initiatives to engage parents have had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Most parents are very supportive of the school, have very few concerns and appreciate the good leadership provided by the headteacher. One typical comment was, 'A small school that makes my children feel safe, valued and proud. I consider this school to be a great start to my children's academic career.'

Children usually enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the expected level of skills for their age except in writing, which lags behind a little. Good teaching and the intelligent use of assessment information promotes good learning across the school. By the time pupils leave Year 4, their standards are higher than those expected for their age. This means that pupils' achievement, including for those with moderate learning difficulties, is good.

The school cares for pupils well. Staff are always available to offer advice and assistance when needed, and pupils appreciate this. Pupils receive some advice about how to improve their work. However, the practice of setting clear targets for improvement is not common enough. The school's consistent focus on pupils' welfare ensures their personal development is good. Behaviour has improved because all staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. Pupils know that a good diet and plenty of exercise are required to grow up healthily and they enjoy the benefits of the newly introduced hot lunches.

The headteacher provides a good role model for staff and pupils. She has a positive approach, which encourages colleagues and pupils to give of their best. Excellent governance keeps the school up to scratch and provides strong continuity of leadership. Effective monitoring and planning have meant good improvements since the previous inspection and a continuing good capacity for the future. While the school has some interesting links with others far afield, these are not systematically used to promote community cohesion, which is judged satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start the Reception Year with skills and aptitudes similar to those of others of the same age. Good leadership and management, including particularly sharp assessment and its good use to tailor activities to children's needs, means that achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children start Year 1 with skills that are above the expected levels. The exception to this positive picture is found in their writing skills. These are below expectations when they enter the school but, thanks to effective and thoughtful teaching children reach expected levels by the time they move into Year 1.

Teaching and learning are good. The teacher and teaching assistant work closely together, ensuring that all children are properly challenged in their work. They keep a close eye on the children, carefully noting and recording what they are able to do. They review and adjust subsequent planning in the light of this information. The curriculum is good and offers a sensible

balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. The adult/child ratio and rather open outside area means that children cannot wander freely indoors and out to pursue their interests.

Parents are closely involved in their children's development. Good relationships are fostered from the start by close contact with nursery settings and by numerous meetings with parents at the beginning of the school year. Provision for children's welfare is good and adults carefully record benchmarks in children's development in numerical assessments, notes and photographs. The large quantities of information are thoroughly organised on computers and easily accessible to staff. End-of-year reports to parents are on CDs and contain written, photographic and audio information reflecting the happy times children have spent in the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of academic guidance given to pupils, so that they are all clear about the next steps they should take to improve their work.
- Develop a systematic approach to promoting community cohesion through more effective planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are largely above expected levels. However, despite good achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, writing skills are a little lower. Good teaching consolidates the gains made by children in their first year at school. Results in the Year 2 national assessments are above average and have been for a number of years. While writing standards remain a little lower than in other areas, the school's new assessment and intervention strategies are starting to have a positive impact.

By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, their standards are consistently higher than those expected of pupils of this age. The school's efforts to increase opportunities for speaking and listening are having a positive impact on writing standards which are, by this age, close to those in other subjects. Given their starting points when they enter the Reception class, pupils' achievement is good. The school's inclusive practices ensure that no-one is left behind and there are no significant inconsistencies in achievement between groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel that they belong to a caring, friendly school and think they are valued and listened to. They appreciate the wide range of opportunities that the school offers. Under the effective management of their teachers, behaviour has improved. It is now good, but there is occasional ill behaviour. Pupils enjoy learning and playing at school and relationships are mainly positive. Pupils report very little bullying and, where it occurs, the school deals with it very effectively. Attendance has fallen a little and is now average. This is because a small minority of parents keep pupils at home unnecessarily.

Pupils understand how to stay safe. They know the limits of the school grounds, across which they must not stray and are aware of potential perils on the internet. The school council offers good opportunities for them to contribute to the school community and older ones develop feelings of responsibility for others. For example, they regularly act as 'buddies' to the youngest children. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn about other cultures through the curriculum and other activities, such as 'Bollywood' dancing at the

start of the day, to get everyone lively and ready for work. Good progress in key areas such as literacy and numeracy, and the well-planned transition to middle schools, prepare pupils well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers explain things clearly and deliver lessons at a brisk pace. They ask perceptive questions and ensure tasks are challenging enough, so that pupils of all abilities and ages learn well. Teachers make good use of support staff, lessons are well resourced and they employ effective strategies to help those pupils who may be experiencing difficulty. More able pupils are provided with good opportunities to extend their understanding.

Teachers' clear explanation of learning objectives enables pupils to understand what they are expected to learn in each lesson. Staff keep a close eye on pupils and this promotes good responses, so that their behaviour and motivation are both good. Pupils participate keenly in class and say they enjoy their lessons.

Teachers assess progress thoroughly and use this information to help them identify where pupils may need extra help and to plan future lessons. Marking is encouraging and sometimes shows pupils how to improve their work but, while there is a clear marking policy, practice across the school is inconsistent. Pupils receive targets to help them move to the next level, but most only have vague ideas about their next steps. Overall, pupils' understanding of what they should do to improve their work is often insufficient.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets all requirements and is well planned to ensure complete coverage. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched by good opportunities to take part in educational trips and to welcome interesting visitors to the school. Special experiences, such as 'India week', develop their understanding of other cultures but do not promote community cohesion sufficiently. Pupils greatly enjoy the good range of sporting and other after-school clubs and attend in large numbers. The school has a strong focus on personal, social and health education and the quality of this element of the curriculum leads to interesting lessons, good opportunities for discussion and promotes pupils' personal development very well. Effective curriculum links with pre-school settings and middle schools ease pupils' transition both into and out of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel they are well nurtured and that the school is a caring community. They know there are adults who can help them at all times, should they have any concerns. The good deployment of talented support staff in lessons and elsewhere promotes good learning. The school works well with other agencies to assist those who find learning more difficult, so that these pupils make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils are well supported when they move to a new class or to a new school, so that they settle in easily.

The school has sound procedures for safeguarding pupils, who feel safe at school. Risk assessments are thorough. The school works closely with its educational welfare officer to

promote attendance. Pupils receive helpful verbal guidance on the quality of their work, but, even for older pupils, the use of more formal written comments and targets is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides consistently effective leadership and works harmoniously with her colleagues, ensuring that the school has shared values and makes good progress towards common goals. Staff share a strong commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity for all, and the outcomes of this are reflected in the consistency of pupils' achievement.

Self-evaluation is central to the school's activities. Regular reviews, such as lesson monitoring, provide leaders and managers with a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information is utilised to prioritise for the future, especially in the good school development plan. This is a clear document, well organised to provide the school with challenging targets and to promote a regular scrutiny of its progress towards meeting them.

Governors know the school intimately because they monitor its activities very closely. They analyse assessment data regularly and in detail. They are closely involved with the progress of the school development plan. Using their excellent knowledge of the school, they provide very effective support and challenge. They plan well to ensure continuity in the school when there are changes to key staff.

The school has excellent links with other local organisations. Parents are happy with the communication with school and the way they are consulted. The school benefits from membership of a local network of primary, middle and secondary schools. It enjoys good support from the church, village and local authority. Whilst the school has some effective links with other schools elsewhere in the world, such as in Africa, it is aware that it does not have a systematic method of promoting community cohesion. Plans are in place to make improvements in this area.

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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?	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	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?	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

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?	3
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	1
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 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lympsham First School, Lympsham BS24 0EW

Thank you for contributing to inspection and the friendly welcome you gave to the inspectors. As many of you suggested to us, Lympsham is a good school.

You are taught well because your teachers provide interesting lessons and are always careful to check up that you have learned everything that you should. They make sure you behave well and you play your part by being interested and working energetically. During your time at school, you achieve well and, by the end of Year 4, your standards are higher than those of most other pupils of the same age. The mixture of subjects you study (the curriculum) is good and is made more interesting by the visits you go on.

You are well cared for and you told us there is always someone you can turn to if you need advice or help. Not all pupils know how to improve their work because marking of work and setting of targets are not always good. Your personal development is good and behaviour has certainly improved since the last inspection. The headteacher and staff lead and manage the school well and receive very good assistance from governors.

I have asked the school to improve in two areas:

- Give clearer advice to you about how your work could be better. You can help in this by asking teachers to explain how you can improve.
- Plan to develop your understanding of your role in the local area, in the country and across the world.

Once again, thank you for all your help. It was good to meet you. With all good wishes for the future,

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan Lead inspector