

Symondsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113815
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	338246
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Smith
Headteacher	Helen Farmer
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited four lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, the school council, specialist education practitioners and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at lesson and curriculum plans, health, safety and safeguarding documentation as well as data relating to the pupils' progress and standards. Completed questionnaires from staff and pupils, together with 43 replies from parents were also scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- What tracking documents show is the progress of pupils in numeracy, literacy, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- What the impact is of leaders and managers at all levels on the provision and outcomes for pupils.
- The extent to which teachers plan work for pupils of different abilities, including high attainers and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well the curriculum delivers aspects such as multicultural education and community cohesion.
- The extent to which the school's self-evaluation of strengths in care, guidance and support, and aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda is accurate.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average primary school draws pupils from the local town as well as the wider rural area. It has more girls than boys and the majority of pupils are of White British heritage; there is well-below the average number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above the expected level. This is partly the result of the school's dual registration with a local special school. Many of these pupils have complex learning needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is delivered through a Reception class. A breakfast club operates from a room on the school site. The school has been nationally recognised through the Healthy Schools and food for life awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Parents and carers recognise the outstanding education provided by the school. One wrote, 'a very happy and inclusive school with very caring staff and special efforts made with sport and music'. The enjoyment of pupils is clear and they tell of feeling safe and secure. Consequently, they are able to concentrate on their studies, settle quickly, and progress so very well. The commitment to equal opportunity and the education of the whole child reflects the vision of the highly motivated headteacher.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they show extremely positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' relationships with adults and peers are such that they are prepared to engage with their learning and are willing to get involved in the life of the school. Their contribution to the school and local community is outstanding, whether litter-picking, singing for the elderly, sharing their productions in various local villages, or giving support for the local apple conservation project.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception year. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2009 are above average overall. Many pupils attained the higher level, particularly in mathematics, and this reflects the positive outcome of the school's focus in this area. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve outstandingly given their starting points.

The pupils' approach to their work contributes significantly to the progress made, but it is also the consequence of consistently good and often outstanding teaching and a varied and stimulating curriculum. Pupils are highly motivated by the very good emphasis by teachers in providing varied activities and approaches to learning. For example, a Year 4 geography lesson had pupils writing, using laptops, and acting out a televised weather forecast, choosing appropriate symbols and regions of Britain. Their enjoyment was obvious. There exist some inconsistencies in practice. On occasions, teachers miss opportunities for paired discussions and to challenge learning further through questioning. While assessment is used well to set work for pupils of different abilities, there is room for highlighting throughout planning as to where, during lessons, individuals such as high attainers can be challenged to progress.

All leaders, and some are relatively new to post, share the commitment to improvement. The rigour of monitoring and accuracy of self-evaluation are well established and have brought, for example, improvement in teaching. This mirrors the attention to detail of the headteacher and assistant headteacher. Highly successful inclusion, the success in trialling and implementing cross-age, ability groupings in mathematics, which brought about such improved standards, and the highly effective use of external partnerships to benefit pupils, reflect a very good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Remove the inconsistencies in teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers' questioning revisits the pupil after an answer to challenge further and deepen their knowledge and understanding
 - opportunities are maximised for paired discussions
 - teachers use their prior knowledge of assessment to identify throughout lesson planning where appropriate challenge can be presented to pupils of different abilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Currently, standards are above average and achievement is excellent. A parent wrote, 'My two children both enjoy school; their teachers manage to get the most out of them whilst having fun at the same time.' This was very apparent during a science lesson, when pupils responded so well to mimicking the behaviour of gases, solids and liquids outside in the playground. The pupils made really good progress and consolidated the learning they had made in the classroom. Pupils are developing extremely well as independent learners. In a reading lesson, younger pupils remained on task, whether an adult was working with them or not. Two boys were determined to 'beat' the computer program challenge, while others concentrated hard on using dictionaries to establish the meaning of words prepared in advance for them by the teacher.

Progress for pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, is outstanding. Those pupils without serious special educational needs, by the end of Year 6 in 2009, attained well-above-average standards in English and high standards in mathematics. Almost seven out of ten pupils attained the higher Level 5 in science and well over half of pupils did so in English and mathematics.

Pupils have high levels of knowledge about how to stay healthy and safe. This reflects the work associated with the national awards achieved by the school, but also the ongoing reinforcement of such messages delivered through the curriculum. They participated in a health and safety audit and recognised problems not identified by the adults! The level of pupils' basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), in which subject, for example an animation project motivates pupils, is above average. The pupils also learn about the world of work through visitors such as the police and a dentist. These skills, together with a range of team-working opportunities, for which an award has been won, ensure the pupils are outstandingly prepared for future life. The pupils show a very healthy respect and understanding for different cultures and lifestyles. For example, a foreign link led to an assembly where pupils reflected on the size of the water carrier carried daily by children from the Sudanese school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use a very good range of strategies to meet the individual learning needs of pupils. Resources similarly are used very well to ensure that all pupils are able to access their learning. Skilled teaching assistants contribute very well, usually using good, open-ended questioning to test pupils' knowledge. Teachers' questioning is generally good but there are, on occasions, missed opportunities to revisit and further challenge pupils' knowledge and understanding. Similarly, inconsistency exists in the use of paired discussion opportunities and the interweaving into lesson plans of where individual pupils of different abilities can be further challenged. A new approach to assessment in mathematics is helping to identify the next steps for pupils. Good marking gives very appropriate guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

The curriculum manifestly meets the needs of pupils. Never complacent, the school is looking to develop further the already established cross-curricular skills approach. Innovative approaches are trialled and adopted. For example, the 'Action Research' project helped target pupils in need of more positive experiences of school. The 'Innovations' project contributed extremely well to pupils' multicultural understanding. Memorable experiences help support learning and include theme weeks, local studies and visitors such as drama groups and a potter.

Care, support and guidance are outstanding in this highly inclusive school. The school maximises the advantages of its size; adults know the pupils and parents and carers so

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

well. Very positive links with the special school exist and external specialists are actively sought out. Two specialists commented upon the commitment of the school to delivering their strategies for individual children fully. One parent summed this up: 'Staff are sensitive to our child's difficulties and support accordingly, not just academically but socially and within the PSHE (personal, social and health education) framework as well...she has made great progress.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A very strong element of leadership and management at the school is how all adults accept responsibility and support the drive for continual improvement. Using the very strong primary school cluster links, the co-ordinator for the gifted and talented has contributed to pupils' experiences through leading the provision of writing workshops, drama day and exceptional sports activities. Teaching assistants have received training to work with parents and carers at a local school, as part of a reciprocal arrangement. Rigorous monitoring leads to highly appropriate development planning, as well as regular reports to the very effective governing body. The governors meet their responsibilities for safeguarding well. Partnerships, including those with parents and carers, are excellent. Parents and carers praise the exceptional arrangements and annual information for transition to different years, as well as into and out of the school. One wrote of the 'very impressive speed of response to any issue raised and level of feedback to me as a parent'. Analysis of the school's work to promote community cohesion has resulted in the identification of the need to develop national links further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

A parent wrote, 'Our daughter can't wait to get to school every morning...she adores her teacher.' This reflects the high quality of relationships, which result in the children feeling safe and secure. In this nurturing environment, the children progress very well. Children's levels of skills on entry vary and reflect the impact of small numbers. Currently, the children enter with knowledge and skills towards the lower end of what is expected for their age. Consistently good teaching ensures that children achieve very well, particularly in linking sounds and letters and in their social and personal development. The children's independence is very well developed through a range of strategies, such as when they access their own learning materials. The children's knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy is exceptional. They talk about a variety of healthy foods, beyond fruit, while demonstrating in their movement around the class and play area a strong awareness for the safety of others. The children respond exceptionally well to the good and varied activities in lessons, showing excitement and enjoyment when practising sounds using the interactive whiteboard for guidance. There is insufficient emphasis in teachers' planning on the learning expected of the children when using the outdoor area. Comparatively new leadership is in place and highly relevant development plans have been identified, including the need for a focus on children's creative development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who completed a questionnaire were satisfied with the overall education of their children. A small proportion had concerns over the progress of their children and whether needs were being met. The inspection team felt progress was, for

the majority of pupils, excellent and that the school was very good at meeting the needs of a wide range of pupils. On the quality of parental and carer links, one wrote, 'Parents are listened to at all times thus making a very good relationship...whenever I have had a concern everyone involved has had time to discuss and help.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Symondsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 99 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	56	16	37	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	56	18	42	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	37	23	53	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	42	21	49	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	49	21	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	44	21	49	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	58	18	42	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	30	28	65	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	40	22	51	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	37	25	58	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	28	28	65	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	47	23	53	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	49	22	51	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Symondsburry Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bridport, DT6 6HD

Thank you for being so welcoming to us when we visited your school. You were eager to talk to us and curious about our work. We listened carefully to what you had to say. We feel your school is better than good ' it is outstanding.

We found many things that were really good about your school. The way you behave is excellent. You care for each other so well and get along with adults and other pupils extremely well. We could see that you want to do well and this is one of the reasons why you make such excellent progress in your work. Well done!

Talking to you, we got a feeling of how deeply you understood about how to stay healthy and safe. When you sing and do your productions out in the local villages, you are making an extremely good contribution to your local community. Thanks to the school council for their help; they represented you very well.

You told us that you feel safe and well cared for by the adults. We feel that your school goes out of its way to ensure this. You all have the chance to learn to the best of your ability and get involved in the life of the school. You also told us how much you enjoyed your lessons and the other great things you have presented to you. We believe you receive good and sometimes even better teaching. Watching you being entertained by Wizard William, I am convinced that you do enjoy school!

Even really good schools like yours can get better. We have asked the school to make sure that, in all lessons, teachers give you the chance to share your ideas and that they test your understanding when questioning you and challenge you really well.

Thank you again and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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