

# Exford Church of England First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123756
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	340416
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Clifton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jackie Burns
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frances Burns
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 July 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited five lessons and observed three teaching staff. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspector talked to pupils in lessons and at break times. He observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including development planning, recent monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures and pupils' books. He analysed nine responses to the questionnaires from parents and carers

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the current picture of learning and progress, particularly in mathematics and writing
- how well leaders have improved pupils' writing and the use of information and communication technology (ICT)
- how well teaching meets the needs of different pupils in the mixed-age classes
- the extent to which pupils are involved in self-assessment and setting their own targets to improve their learning.

## Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average size school with two classes, serving a large rural area. All pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside others in Years 1 and 2. They have a separate outside learning area. The school is federated with another local first school and a middle school with a single governing body for the three schools. At present there is one headteacher for the two first schools. From September 2010, a new headteacher has been appointed to lead all three schools. An assistant headteacher will take responsibility for the day-to-day running of this school.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Exford Church of England First is a satisfactory school, where pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory. Given the very small numbers of pupils, attainment varies from year to year but is overall, above average by the time they leave the school. Children get off to a good start in Reception and reach above expected levels by the time they enter Year 1, from their starting points, which are broadly in line with expectations. The provision in Reception is strong because learning activities are adapted frequently to meet the children's needs. The care given to pupils is good and a particular strength of the school and as a result, the pupils say they feel very safe. This reflects how well adults know pupils and their families. Pupils get on well with each other.

Across the school, relationships are very strong and the pupils enjoy activities, particularly when using information and communication technology (ICT) and when working together in groups. However, planning is not consistently effective enough to ensure good learning in Years 1 to 4. The learning goals identified for different pupils in lessons are not sharp enough. This results in a few activities not providing the right level of challenge. However, pupils' positive attitudes contribute well to their learning and they are very keen to show what they know and understand.

Leaders have made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised when the school was last inspected. Handwriting and spelling have been improved and ICT is often used in different subjects. Teachers do not always use different reading texts well enough to show good examples of writing. This results in the pupils struggling to think of more adventurous vocabulary. When pupils are given opportunities to develop their thinking through paired talk, they respond enthusiastically. However, this is an under-deployed strategy in lessons. Teachers guide pupils in how to improve their writing and they have targets but these are not used consistently across the school.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, inconsistencies in provision remain because monitoring and evaluation of teaching has not been sufficiently robust. The federation between the schools has expanded the pool of expertise available to share good practice. Early signs of the impact of this collaboration are positive.

Across the school, relationships are very positive and adults strongly promote values of respect and caring about each other. The pupils say they always make sure everybody is included. They have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe and contribute well to the local community. Their understanding of others from different

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ethnic backgrounds is underdeveloped and this reflects the school's limited success in promoting stronger links in the wider community within the United Kingdom.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the large majority of teaching is good or better by October 2011 by:
  - ensuring that all lessons have a learning focus which is challenging for all pupils
  - ensuring that class teaching provides better examples and opportunities to enliven learning and promote higher expectations
  - providing better opportunities for the pupils to develop thinking through active speaking and listening.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by drawing on expertise, particularly within the federation, to provide good quality feedback to teachers which they act upon to improve.
- Improve provision for community cohesion to develop pupils' understanding of different cultures, particularly within the United Kingdom.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**3**

Lessons observed by inspectors, and reviews of pupils' work confirm that learning is satisfactory. Good progress in reading reflects improvements in the way the pupils learn the sounds from different letter combinations and use these to read new words. Pupils use measuring skills well in science and their creative work in art is strong. Year 3 and 4 pupils showed a good level of perseverance in an extended task, during an investigation in mathematics. Pupils in Year 3 used computers confidently to produce helpful hints for new pupils coming to the school. By the time they leave the school, pupils have good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT and apply these securely. Their personal qualities such as working in teams and being prepared to take on leadership roles are good. The school's tracking information shows that pupils' learning and progress from their different starting points is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The work seen for older pupils shows that attainment is above average in English and mathematics.

Pupils enjoy coming to school very regularly. Pupils set consistent standards of behaviour for themselves and understand why it is important to have rules. There are plenty of toys for them to play with during break times and they are adept at making up their own energetic games. They enjoy eating fruit at break times, or the healthy school lunches. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 take on responsibility to help the school run smoothly. They look after plants by watering them regularly. The Eco club is successfully encouraging an awareness of conservation through turning off lights and recycling. Pupils sing confidently in assembly and reflect quietly on how they can help each other and cope with change.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers make activities and learning fun. Pupils really enjoy using their skills to draw pictures of Henry VIII and using pictures of street scenes from Tudor times to think about what life was like then. Pupils benefit from being in small classes where they receive regular help and support from teachers and teaching assistants. While the use of 'word walls' is helping to remind pupils about different words they can use in writing, text is not used widely enough to provide examples of more adventurous or unusual words. Basic skills are taught well. However, learning is satisfactory rather than good because activities are not consistently meeting pupils' learning needs. There are good examples of marking in English which identifies steps for improvement, particularly for older pupils. However, this is inconsistent in other subjects and classes.

The school has a strong ethos of values and beliefs which promotes good behaviour and ensures that pupils have a great deal of respect for each other. Topics provide pupils with some imaginative learning experiences. There are good examples of artwork linked to topics, in the style of different artists. The curriculum is enhanced by specialists coming into the school to teach dance and music. ICT is used, for example, to write instructions for making a mask in design and technology. However, while the curriculum has these strengths, overall it is adequately meeting the pupils' academic needs. Opportunities for the pupils to write at length are too infrequent.

The school provides a welcoming learning environment. Good transition arrangements

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

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to the next school are in place and have been helped by the federation arrangements. Adults use their good knowledge of the pupils and their families to ensure that any concerns are dealt with sensitively and promptly.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders are focused on seeking further improvements. Pupils' individual progress is monitored carefully. Steps to secure good teaching have been taken but are not yet fully effective. However, the federation partnership has already widened opportunities for staff development through good joint working arrangements. Staff share good practice regularly and this is strengthening provision. All the necessary safeguarding checks for staff and other adults are in place. Policies are up to date and meet requirements. Risks are carefully assessed before trips and visits take place. Child protection training for staff is securely in place.

Leaders are very aware that some pupils have little experience of working with others from different cultures and backgrounds. Steps to combat this are in place; for example, the trip to Bristol for Year 4 pupils includes a visit to a Sikh Temple. However, links with a school in a contrasting area to promote pupils' experience of different cultures are at an early stage of development. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination for all pupils is satisfactory. Leaders actively tackle any stereotypical views and consult regularly with parents.

Members of the governing body have a well-developed understanding of the context of the school and ensure that the needs of the school are represented in meetings. Over the past year, they have drawn together policies across the federation. They have clear information about pupils' progress and are beginning to use this to challenge leaders to raise attainment even further.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

As a result of good leadership and teaching, children make good progress in their learning during the Reception Year and enter Year 1 with levels of attainment that are above average. The children feel very safe working together and alongside the older pupils. Provision is mostly adapted well to their needs. Good individual support is provided to help them develop their understanding of letters and sounds; as a result, reading skills are well above expectations. Memorable experiences include digging up potato plants to see what is in the soil. The activity provided much interest and enthusiasm, comparing sizes and counting how many they could find. However, the provision is not always sufficiently distinct from that in Years 1 and 2, for example when they join in with whole-class introductions. While children spell and write simple words confidently, opportunities for them to write in different ways, for example as part of role play, are too irregular. Staff keep careful records which are used well to plan for learning, and adults are deployed well. The inside and outdoor learning areas are well resourced.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

The questionnaires, from about half of the families who returned them, reflect a positive relationship with all of them. The children feel very safe and happy in school. A small number of comments were made by the parents and carers on the questionnaires. The inspector agrees with comments about children being happy, and well looked after, and



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the need to 'look further afield' to enhance their life experiences.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Exford Church of England First 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 inspector received 9 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 20 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	78	2	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	33	5	56	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	33	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	33	2	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	67	3	33	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)	3	3	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	33	4	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	33	4	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	44	5	56	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



1 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Exford Church of England First School, Minehead TA24 7PP

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you and was impressed with your friendliness. You spoke very confidently about what you liked about school. You go to a satisfactory school. Adults in the school know you very well as individuals. They care for you well and keep you safe. Satisfactory teaching is helping you to make sound progress. You have positive attitudes to learning and work well together. By the time you leave school, you reach or exceed the levels expected and this prepares you well for your next school.

These are some of the other important good things that I found.

- You make good progress in your reading.
- You get on very well with each other in school.
- You make a good contribution to school life through helping out.
- You have a good understanding about being healthy.
- The youngest children in your school make good progress in their Reception Year.

I have asked your headteacher and the other adults to do these things.

- Help you to learn better by making sure you get work at just the right level for you, have introductions to lessons which give you a clearer understanding of what you can achieve and give you more opportunities to talk together to help your thinking.
- Use the expertise within your federation to ensure that teachers enable you to learn as much as possible in lessons.
- Help you improve your understanding of others from different backgrounds and cultures.
- You can help by continuing to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead inspector

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