

West Coker Cof E VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123821
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340434
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Raymond Jardine

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Strickland
Headteacher	Rachel Howchin
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 11 lessons involving five of the six teachers on the staff. Meetings were held with the headteacher, chair of governors, staff and with pupils drawn from every class.

Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including policies and practices for safeguarding children, the minutes of governors' meetings, assessment records and returns from 30 parents' questionnaires.

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

- pupils' learning and progress, particularly in mathematics and for the more able pupils, to determine the extent to which teaching has improved
- the extent to which pupils are using assessments and targets to work independently in improving their work
- the impact of the school's work to promote understanding of cultural diversity and the worldwide community.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than average and serves the village of West Coker and surrounding areas. There are four mixed-age classes. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. A below-average proportion is registered as having special educational needs and/or disabilities but none currently has a statement of special educational needs. The large majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and a few are from other White backgrounds and from Gypsy/Roma. The school gained a National Activemark award in 2008 and, more recently, Healthy School status. The school has undergone a number of staffing changes in the past two years, including a new headteacher who was appointed a year ago.

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

The school provides a friendly and encouraging learning environment and a stimulating and varied curriculum. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. They are well cared for by a committed staff and there are effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Consequently, they feel safe and secure, behave well and contribute much to making the school a very harmonious community. There are many ways in which pupils take responsibility, for example as 'perfect partners' helping younger pupils with their reading, raising considerable charitable funds and through the influential school council. Pupils are also involved in many sporting activities and local events such as drama and church festivals which contribute much to their good spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The school recognises that more needs to be done to help pupils better appreciate the diversity of cultural traditions and different ways of life nationally and in the wider world as part of its contribution to community cohesion.

The school has emerged from a difficult period of staffing changes, including to its senior leadership, which adversely affected standards. Attainment in Year 6 has been typically about average or a little above and pupils' progress satisfactory. However, both attainment and progress by Year 6 dipped significantly in 2009. The school's self-evaluation is proving effective and the new headteacher has an accurate understanding of the underlying causes of the dip last year. She has united the staff around clear strategies in a drive to improve the school's performance. A momentum of improved learning and progress, particularly in English, is now clearly evident. Pupils' progress is currently at least satisfactory, but better in English than in mathematics. Some pupils progress well, particularly children in Reception. One key strategy that is driving these improvements is the greater rigour with which assessment is being used to guide teaching and constructive feedback to pupils. Pupils too are learning to use targets to review and improve their own work. These strategies are work-in-progress, better developed in English than mathematics and not yet fully embedded into the school's work. Even so, the impact of these well-chosen improvement strategies demonstrates the school's satisfactory potential to sustain its improvement. While the teachers contribute much by undertaking tasks such as mentoring newly qualified teachers, staff and governors realise that the headteacher is leading on too many key areas of the school's work. Governors plan to help the headteacher distribute leadership roles more extensively to accelerate the pace of improvement, but these well-considered plans are not yet implemented.

Teaching varies in quality: there is considerable good teaching but it is not yet consistently so between classes and tends to be better in English than in mathematics.

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One reason is that more-able pupils are sometimes not challenged enough. Good support is provided for vulnerable pupils such as those with speech and language difficulties. Links between subjects through themes and topics add interest and creativity to the curriculum and good communication with parents enables them to contribute to their children's learning and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching quality to make it consistently good, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that the more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Extend the rigour with which assessment is used to raise standards by:
 - embedding new practices for assessing pupils' work and making pupils aware of the next steps in their learning across all subjects
 - encouraging greater pupil independence in using their targets to review and improve their work.
- Implement plans to distribute leadership roles more fully to accelerate the pace of improvement.
- Extend pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity in modern Britain and the world-wide community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Progress seen in lessons varies between classes; most pupils work effectively and with enjoyment and in a minority of lessons, progress is good, but in others the more able could go further, particularly in mathematics. Pupils do better in English, partly because the school has focused attention on pupils' writing in recent years and also new arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress are better established. Pupils say they much appreciate the more specific guidance that they receive about their written work. Girls have tended to progress better than boys as the school is aware, but this gap is now closing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are assessed and supported well in lessons so that they are fully engaged in learning.

Pupils know well how to stay safe, including road safety, their own security and internet safety. Pupils from all backgrounds respect and care for each other. They report that harassment and bullying are very rare and that they know what to do if it occurs. They play very well together and enjoy all that the school offers, including growing vegetables in the garden and participating in many sporting opportunities. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily, and through monitoring pupils' choices at lunchtime, have a good awareness of the impact of their action. Attendance is typically about average but there are signs of improvement this year. Pupils arrive punctually. They are learning to work more independently and they acquire sound skills to prepare them for their next stage in education and adult life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are set in stimulating contexts and practical resources are often used well to help pupils make progress. Relationships are good and, in nearly all lessons, little time is lost in managing pupils' attention or behaviour. Typically, pupils know the objectives and expectations for their learning and teachers build on pupils' previous learning well through their questioning. In most lessons, tasks are adapted for the range of abilities and experienced teaching assistants effectively lead the work with targeted groups, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, teaching quality across the school is not consistently good, partly because there are times, mainly in mathematics, when tasks are not challenging enough, particularly for the most-able pupils. Pupils have curriculum targets for their literacy and mathematics which are also shared with parents so that they can contribute to their children's learning. Pupils are becoming more adept at reviewing their own and each other's work using these and other success criteria but there is more to do before pupils are really confident in working independently. Teaching is improving, particularly in English, as a result of the more rigorous approach being taken to assessing pupils' work and progress. Feedback from marking gives clear indications of strengths and specific next steps that pupils find very helpful, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

The school has successfully worked to make the curriculum more exciting and relevant through the use of linked themes across the curriculum. For example, Years 5 and 6

¹ 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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pupils proudly displayed their impressive museum of Egyptian artefacts for parents. The many exhibits were all made by pupils with each having its own explanatory commentary. French is taught to all pupils from Year 3. A number of links with sports and other organisations effectively extend coaching opportunities for pupils and help promote their health and well-being. Visits out of school, such as to museums and residential visits for Year 6, further enrich their experiences.

Staff know their pupils very well. Effective systems of reward and sanctions promote pupils’ good behaviour. The needs of vulnerable pupils are catered for well and support for them in lessons is good. Parents are fully involved in regularly assessing and reviewing the progress of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and specific and detailed plans are made for them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has clear improvement strategies in its development plan based on an accurate assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. These priorities are well understood by governors and staff, and are being implemented with determination and teamwork. As a consequence, the decline in standards has been reversed and teaching is improving. The headteacher provides drive and a clear direction and is leading most aspects of the school improvement, partly due to the loss of a senior leader. Governors and staff recognise that greater devolvement of leadership is required to raise the momentum of improvement. The school’s ethos and values are central to its work to promote equality of opportunity. New systems for monitoring and reviewing pupils’ progress introduced this year are more effectively identifying where pupils may be falling behind and identifying patterns of different progress. These revised assessment arrangements are proving effective but are not yet fully embedded into the school’s routine work.

Regular training alongside well-understood and managed child protection and health and safety arrangements contribute to the good safeguarding of pupils. Pupils also have a good understanding of safety issues through the school’s curriculum. Parents receive weekly newsletters about school life, are consulted regularly and guided in ways of helping the children to learn. Governors satisfactorily carry out their responsibilities in monitoring the school and are increasingly involved in challenging how well the school is doing. The chair of governors is working to ensure that their monitoring of key priorities

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becomes a systematic feature of the school’s management. The school is much involved with the local community, particularly through its church links. A review of its contribution to community cohesion recognises these strengths and the good relationships that pupils enjoy among their peers from different social and ethnic backgrounds. However, national and international links are less well developed at present.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Reception with a wide range of knowledge and skills that overall are a little below those expected for their age. There are good transition arrangements made for them and the rich and stimulating environment provided enables them to make good progress in all areas of learning. Children have well-established routines and adults convey clear and consistent expectations for their behaviour and engagement with others. This promotes their growing personal, social and emotional development very well. Children are continuously assessed and detailed records made of their progress guide their next steps in learning. Consequently, they build on their knowledge and skills well through a wide range of well-planned and stimulating activities that cover all the areas of learning, often linked by interesting themes or stories. There are strengths in children’s progress in their knowledge of letters, sounds and writing and in their problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. In one lesson, children enjoyed counting forward and back in tens to a hundred together and responding to their teacher’s challenging questions. They learned to use money to buy cakes at their cake shop. Some played games to match their sums to numbered turtles while others worked at the computer. A

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good balance is maintained between activities which are adult led and children’s choice so that children learn to become more independent. The provision is managed well by an experienced and knowledgeable practitioner of Early Years Foundation Stage education. By the end of Reception, most children have met or exceeded the goals expected and all have progressed well.

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	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 very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the school’s work, particularly their children’s enjoyment of school life and the teaching quality. One reported that: ‘We love the camaraderie that there is between the older and the younger ones.’ A few say they would like more sports opportunities provided but inspectors found that pupils enjoy a wide range of sports and also coaching from outside organisations.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Coker Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 77 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	73	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	60	12	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	50	13	43	2	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	50	13	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	63	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	50	12	40	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	53	10	33	2	7	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)	15	50	13	43	2	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	47	15	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	40	13	43	0	0	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	30	16	53	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	50	9	30	2	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	47	14	47	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



19 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Coker Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Yeovil, BA22 9AS

Thank you for the warm and polite welcome that we received when we visited your school recently. I am writing to let you know about what we learned. But first of all our thanks go to you and the parents and carers who completed our questionnaire.

Yours is a satisfactory and improving school where you get on well together. You enjoy your learning and all that the school offers. Standards in Year 6 have been typically about average or a little above other schools but there was a dip in test results last year. Standards this year are significantly better. You enjoy your lessons and you told us how you are using your targets to review your work, particularly in English. Teachers have been developing new ways of assessing your work more carefully to help you to improve. This is one reason why teaching is getting better at the school. There is some good teaching but we found that some of you could be challenged more in mathematics to help you make better progress. So we are recommending that the school works to ensure that teaching is consistently good. Improvements already coming about, through better marking of your work, are still developing. Your teachers are continuing their efforts to make these routine to their support for you. You can help too by becoming more skilled at using your targets to review your own work.

We were impressed by your good behaviour, relationships and the care that older pupils provide for younger ones. You know how to stay safe and make healthy choices in your lives. You contribute much to your school and to the local community through your links with the church and contribution to local events. The school realises that you need to learn more about other cultural traditions and the world-wide community and we agree. The staff and governors work very hard together and they are always looking for ways of making the school even better. They are planning to help the headteacher bring about improvements more quickly by extending some leadership jobs to more staff.

Yours sincerely

Ray Jardine

Lead inspector

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