

St Dubricius Church of England VA School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123837
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340439
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Graeme Bassett

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sara White
Headteacher	Christopher Blazey
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and observed all six teachers teaching. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, teachers, other staff, governors, groups of pupils and some parents and carers. They looked at pupils' work, teachers' planning and assessment files, school statutory policies, the school improvement plan, curricular planning documents, pupils' tracking and assessment records, evaluations of teaching carried out by the school and the minutes of governors' meetings. Observations were made of pupils in assembly, on the playground and at lunchtime. The team also analysed questionnaires, including 41 returned from parents and carers, 28 from pupils and two from staff.

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

- pupils' progress in their literacy skills
- the quality of teaching and challenges for pupils in mixed-age classes, especially for the more able pupils in writing
- how the school is coping with the recent changes in staffing, and the impact and effectiveness of the new staff structure
- how well leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work to raise standards, especially for writing.

Information about the school

This first school is a small school which serves a number of Exmoor Park villages around Porlock. It is part of a cluster of Exmoor Coast Federation of local schools feeding Minehead Middle School. Nearly all the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Their needs mostly link to specific and moderate learning difficulties and emotional and social difficulties. There are three mixed-aged classes in the school and the Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of children in the designated Nursery of 40 part-time children and Reception children working alongside the Year 1 pupils in a mixed-age class. The school has Financial Management Standard in Schools, Somerset inclusive dyslexia friendly school award, the National Healthy School status, an Activemark for achievement in physical education and sport, and a bronze Eco-Schools award. Children leave this school at the end of Year 4.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is very evident that the pupils enjoy coming to this school as they demonstrate a keen interest in their work each day. This is evident in the enthusiastic way that children, accompanied by their parents and carers, arrive before school starts each morning and pursue their own interests. In many instances, parents start the morning sharing their children's work and interests. It is very evident that all staff provide outstanding care, guidance and support for everyone, which results in pupils being very happy. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have problems. The good partnership with parents helps pupils to share their work, learning and interests, and contributes much to this being a happy school. Positive attitudes reflect pupils' good and open relationships with each other. Their behaviour is outstanding and contributes extremely well to the purposeful working atmosphere and to pupils' good progress.

The leadership and management of the headteacher are good and effective. He has successfully guided the school through a difficult period of prolonged staffing difficulties. Working closely with the supportive parents and clear-thinking governing body, he has fostered a shared vision, and leadership at all levels is good. The school's self-evaluation is good and the improvement of pupils' writing is correctly identified in the school development plan as a priority. Work has successfully begun on improving the way that letters and sounds (phonics) are taught to help pupils with their writing. The school's capacity to sustain improvements is good.

Children enter the school's Nursery with levels of skills below those expected for their age. Their communication, literacy and language skills are less well developed. The Reception children work alongside the Year 1 pupils and this often results in them having too few opportunities to pursue their own child-led initiatives and consequently, their progress is only satisfactory. Pupils' work, assessment information and lessons seen show that pupils throughout Years 1 to 4 make good progress. Attainment by the end of Year 4 is broadly at the expected level in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology and the arts are above expected levels for their age.

The quality of teaching is good overall. New assessment procedures are gradually being introduced in all classes and this helps teachers to plan the next steps of most pupils' learning well, but for the most able pupils, information is not used well enough to ensure that this group are always given challenging things to do. The curriculum is good overall and particularly strong in the promotion of the creative arts.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make good progress, especially by developing their independence and by providing more opportunities for them to select activities for themselves.
- Ensure that teachers use what they know about each pupil's achievements so that the most able pupils are consistently well challenged.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' learning, progress and achievement are good. This helps pupils to have the English, mathematics and science skills that they need for their future school life. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress but their attainment is still below the national average.

From observations in the classrooms, it is now apparent that the teaching of phonics is proving successful. Falling attainment in writing last year in Year 2 has been reversed and pupils are showing growing confidence in their writing and their attainment is broadly average. Pupils do well in learning to read. In Year 4, pupils particularly enjoy writing and are inspired to write at more length, as evident in their work on the Tudor topic where they enjoyed the drama visit of 'Henry the Eighth' and wrote good accounts of his memories as a king. The quality of art, particularly painting and drawing, is excellent and pupils know about the work of different artists, such as Picasso.

Almost all pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils' contributions to the school and the local neighbourhood are good, with many of them accepting monitor roles in the school. Pupils have a strong understanding of different cultures and the world in which they live. For example, pupils know about life in Uganda because of the Ugandan teachers' visit to the school. This enhances pupils' multicultural awareness effectively. They have a good understanding of how to remain healthy by taking part in sports and eating healthily, although they do admit to enjoying chocolate and crisps in moderation!

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2

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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The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers create a purposeful atmosphere within the classrooms. The strength in teaching is evident in the mixed-aged classes where teachers are good at matching work to the needs of different age groups of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants ask searching questions to develop pupils' ideas, vocabulary and skills. For example, Year 4 pupils were challenged imaginatively to be book detectives. Through a series of investigations, they had opportunities to become the publisher, illustrator, editor, author and advertiser for a book they had enjoyed reading. Work is usually well planned to help pupils to learn in a systematic and challenging way. However, some teachers do not always make sufficient use of this information to set individual targets and to plan what pupils, especially the more able ones, need to learn next.

With the creative links between subjects developing well, especially through the use of the local environment, the curriculum is inspiring greater interest and enthusiasm among the pupils. Teachers use interactive whiteboards to enhance pupils' enjoyment and understanding of new things. Sometimes, the over-use of commercially published materials limits pupils' independent thinking.

The staff have outstanding relationships with pupils and they show exceptional concern about each individual pupil's welfare and happiness. Staff take great care to make sure that all pupils are involved in school life. The support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. Children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are given outstanding guidance and support. Many parents and carers report that they have good relationships with teachers and, in nearly all instances, that home/school support and communication, including information about their child's achievements, are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with the extremely good support of the governing body, sets challenging targets to drive this school forward. They effectively share their ambitions for the future with the wider school community. As a result, clear priorities are identified in the school development plan and initiatives to raise attainment in writing and mathematics are helping to accelerate pupils' progress.

The school has experienced some recent staffing difficulties but has coped well to maintain the pupils' good progress. As a result of the very recent staff changes, new teachers have been appointed and others have very recently taken on responsibilities for subject development. Because of this change, monitoring has not picked up that not all lesson plans identify exactly what pupils need to learn next. Even so, frequent analysis of pupils' achievement over the past two terms has been conscientiously appraised and staff have devised good action plans to develop their subjects. These developments are having a marked impact on pupils' work and bringing about a rise in achievement.

The governors are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and make an effective contribution. The school promotes equality of opportunity while tackling discrimination effectively and they are working to make sure that the most able pupils do as well as possible. The governors ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are good and that all statutory requirements, including child protection and risk assessment, are reviewed regularly and approved.

The school works conscientiously to build good community cohesion, especially through strong links between pupils, parents and carers, and the local neighbourhood and, as a result, the school is rated highly by the parents and carers and community. The wide range of out-of-lesson activities, including visits and a residential trip, provides valuable opportunities to create cultural awareness. The visit to Bristol was particularly good in fostering community cohesion within an urban society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to the Nursery class are below expected levels in most areas of learning and particularly low in their communication, language and literacy skills. They quickly settle to the routines of the class and, because of the very good care and guidance, their social and emotional development is outstanding. Provision for children's welfare, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good. Teaching is satisfactory and enables children to learn basic skills in a secure way. Sometimes, however, the staff give answers to the children too readily. For example, instead of saying 'How does this sponge feel?' the children were told, 'This sponge is all squidgy.' Reception children work alongside the pupils in Year 1 and themes in the class are often focused more upon the older pupils' curriculum than on the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, there are too few opportunities for them to follow their own investigations or to initiate their own learning, and so their progress is only satisfactory. Attainment in the Reception class is currently broadly in line with expected levels for their age in mathematics, reading, and social and emotional development, but attainment in writing is not as well developed as it should be. Satisfactory leadership and management are leading to improved provision but there is more to do to ensure that learning is good. Leaders have correctly identified the need to extend the facilities for the children in Early Years Foundation Stage with the proposed building of extensions to include additional facilities for the school and the local community.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers returning the questionnaire was good. Almost all

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who replied to the questionnaire and those who spoke to inspectors expressed their full support for the school. They frequently said how impressed they were by the open nature of the school and the willingness of headteacher and staff to listen if they had concerns or suggestions. Most parents and carers think that St Dubricius is a good and caring school. Very few expressed concerns. Only one questionnaire recorded some unease about how well the school helps parents to support their child's learning. The inspection team found that teachers meet most parents each term, and in most cases provided good support to pupils and endeavoured to involve parents and carers in their child's education.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Dubricius CE 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 inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 87 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	86	6	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	84	7	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	63	15	35	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	70	12	28	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	70	11	26	0	0	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	77	10	23	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)	31	72	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	72	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	67	14	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	67	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	84	7	16	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	86	6	14	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.



5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dubricius Church of England VA Primary School, Porlock, Somerset
TA24 8QJ

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We found that St Dubricius school provides you with a good education. Thank you for telling us your very positive views when you completed the questionnaire. It helped us to get a good picture of your school. Well done!

These are the things that we judged to be good in your school:

- Your headteacher provides good leadership and management.
- The teachers and other staff in your school work well as a team and support your headteacher well.
- Teaching is good and your teachers encourage you to answer questions. Because of this, you make good progress and your work is steadily improving.
- The adults provide outstanding care, guidance and support, especially for those of you who find work difficult at times. As a result, you are all developing very positive attitudes towards your work and towards each other.
- You have a good understanding of how to remain healthy and keep safe.
- You are very polite and your excellent behaviour helps you to create a positive family feeling around the school.
- It was exciting to see how well you are developing your skills in art and information and communication technology.

There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- Ensure that if you are in the Nursery or Reception class, that you have more opportunities to follow your own interests.
- Ensure that your teachers use what they know about what each of you can do so that they plan precisely what you need to learn next, especially for those of you who find learning easy.

Once again, thank you for your help. You can help further by asking your teachers how you can make your work better.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Bassett

Lead inspector

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