

Witchampton Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113821
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	325894
Inspection date	17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Deborah Zachary

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	50
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Euan Gilchrist
Headteacher	Maureen Bowers
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Witchampton Wimborne BH21 5AP
Telephone number	01258 840684
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

- the progress of pupils currently in Year 4 and Year 2, and of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of leadership and management on improving the curriculum and progress.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with staff, pupils and the vice-chair of governors; analysis of the school's data on progress; study of pupils' work; school documentation; questionnaires returned by parents; and observations of lessons and playtime. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's self-evaluation assessments, whilst modest, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Witchampton is a very small school, serving the village and surrounding hamlets. About half the pupils travel from outside the catchment area. The very large majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are taught in three small classes. These mostly contain two year groups, but pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been taught separately since extensions to the buildings were completed in April.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Witchampton is an outstanding school. Pupils' academic achievement is outstanding in all year groups. Their personal development is also exceptional; they have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. First class leadership ensures that staff work as an excellent team, but the pupils themselves also make a very strong contribution to the school's success. As one parent commented, 'The school gives its pupils a wonderful start in life.'

Parents are very highly satisfied. They say the school has 'a real sense of community' and that it is a 'happy, caring school where the needs of the pupils come first'. The pupils do indeed benefit from excellent care, support and guidance. All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff know pupils extremely well and every pupil has clear targets and an individual 'learning challenge' that has been carefully thought out with them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very clearly planned and effective support, and make extremely rapid progress. All pupils get on together extremely well and behaviour is excellent. They become very mature as they move through the school, showing the ability to reflect on moral and spiritual matters despite being so young. They are highly tolerant and welcoming, and keen to learn about others from around the world or from different backgrounds. The school has recently taken a number of steps to give pupils a wider experience of the world community, and draws successfully on local people of different backgrounds to do this. It has rightly identified that its provision to help pupils to identify with the wide range of cultures in Britain today is less strong than its excellent promotion of cohesion in the local and school communities.

As year groups are very small, standards vary tremendously from year to year, depending on the skills with which children entered the school: in some year groups they are exceptionally high, and in others average, but when assessed over a period of years, standards are above average by the time pupils leave. However, at every stage of their schooling, the pupils make exceptional progress from their differing start points. The school is very successful because of a range of factors. The curriculum has been much revised and is now innovative and wide-ranging. Coupled with outstanding teaching, this ensures that pupils hugely enjoy their work and so there is a tremendous atmosphere of learning in all classes. Most importantly, leadership and management are highly systematic. Self-evaluation is detailed and very well thought through, and areas for improvement are identified very clearly. Development planning is comprehensive yet easy to follow, and the school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Two key threads of development over the last two years have had a particular impact. The changes to the building have enabled the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make significantly improved progress, and though development of the outside area is not yet complete, provision is already outstanding. Changes to the curriculum have also had a major influence throughout the school. These include the introduction of a new programme for teaching letters and sounds, which has led to some outstanding progress in reading and has greatly supported the writing of some less able pupils. Particularly noteworthy has been the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support a high level of involvement by pupils in planning their own curriculum. This has enabled the school to be highly responsive to pupils' interests and needs, and their involvement in their own learning has had a strong impact on their personal development. They are very well prepared for their future lives, with exceptionally strong ICT skills as well as an acute ability to evaluate what they need to learn.

Governors, parents, staff at all levels and the children themselves work together to give the school its powerful drive for improvement. The self-evaluation for the inspection, though very accurate in its detail, was modest in its grades because they are constantly identifying new areas for work. The governors are extremely well informed and work closely with the headteacher to challenge and set a very clear direction. They ensure that the school reaches out to parents of all backgrounds. The headteacher achieves an excellent balance between very well organised management and leadership that empowers others. Teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together, and teaching assistants show high levels of teaching skills themselves. Teaching is highly responsive to pupils' needs, with lesson tasks very closely matched to what individuals need to learn next. Staff meet particular needs very well – provision for those who speak English as an additional language, for example, is excellent. The pupils make decisions about how the school could improve through their work on the school council. They have had a strong influence, for example, on the environment during the building programme. As one said, quite rightly, 'We feel we make a difference.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Very effective liaison with pre-school settings and with parents ensures that the children settle quickly. Planning is excellent, with a very clear identification of what the children are going to learn, and the resulting activities meet their individual needs very well because they are rooted in a meticulous assessment system that allows each child's progress to be very closely tracked. Both teacher and teaching assistant support the children and encourage their learning extremely well. During the inspection they had a wonderful time on a pretend voyage in a spaceship, and practised a wide variety of vocabulary during the trip. The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstandingly well led. This year's changes to the building have resulted in a dedicated area being set up for this age group, and the development of an outdoor area with easy access from the classroom. Since April, it has been possible to teach the Early Years Foundation Stage children separately from Years 1 and 2, and their progress has accelerated as a result. At the start of the autumn term, children entered the school with skill levels that were broadly as expected for their age, but stronger in personal development and below expectations in reading and writing. They have already reached standards that are significantly above average in all areas, representing excellent overall progress, although progress in their personal development has not been as striking as in other areas. The school is well aware that the outdoor area is not yet fully functional, lacking shelter and some types of equipment, and this has an impact on activities designed to support specific aspects of personal development such as independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it is fully equipped for children to learn through independent play.
- Improve the provision for community cohesion through providing more opportunities for pupils to appreciate both diversity and common ground amongst people in Britain.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Witchampton Church of England Voluntary Aided First School, Wimborne BH21 5AP

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited you yesterday. We think you are very lucky to have such an outstanding school. You are all making excellent progress because you get such very good teaching and so many very interesting things to do. You and your parents agree that you are extremely well looked after. We were also very impressed by how much you know about how to improve your work and what you are aiming for. Your behaviour is excellent and you have a really good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Well done!

We know you are used to working to improve the school, so we wanted to tell you what we have told the grown-ups who manage the school to work on next to make it even better.

- You have had a lot of building work, and the outside area for the youngest children is not finished yet. It needs more outdoor toys and activities.
- Your school has plans to make links with schools in other parts of the country; we think this will be a good idea so that you can hear more about how other British children live.

All the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Deborah Zachary

Lead inspector