



Verwood Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113779
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279246
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Dickinson AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Howe Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Verwood
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Dorset BH31 6JF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 822652
Number on roll	300	Fax number	01202 822369
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Babs White
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Adam Parsons

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Verwood Church of England First School is a larger than average first school. Most children come from White British backgrounds. Few parents claim free school meals. The number of children who speak English as an additional language is very low. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Children start the Reception class with standards that are broadly typical for their age. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2005. There are two classes for each year group, organised in bases that are named after different trees: oak (Reception), sycamore (Year 1), beech (Year 2), willow (Year 3) and ash (Year 4).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Verwood Church of England First School is an improving school. It provides a satisfactory quality of education and satisfactory value for money. This reflects the school's own self-evaluation of its effectiveness. There are some good features. The school provides well for pupils' personal development. Pupils are well cared for and receive good support, reflecting the strong Christian ethos in the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher provides good leadership. He has a clear vision, based firmly on all pupils doing well and achieving their potential. He has quickly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and has introduced some effective changes. Two good examples are the improved arrangements for assessing pupils and the regular checks on their progress. These changes are starting to have a positive effect on pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. However, not all teachers use information from assessments as well as they could to set targets and help pupils make better progress. The headteacher works closely with parents who are pleased that their views are welcomed. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together and there is a strong team spirit in the school. The deputy headteacher and subject leaders are monitoring pupils' progress. These roles have developed considerably since September, but they are not yet having a full enough impact upon how well pupils do across the school. The school is however in a good position to improve further.

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception. They benefit from a good range of interesting activities. From Year 1 to 4, satisfactory teaching overall helps pupils to make sound progress and in Year 2 teaching is good. Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, the pace of lessons is rather slow, expectations are not high enough and work is not always matched well to the range of pupils' needs. This occurs mostly in Years 3 and 4 because some teachers have changed to this age group, from having taught younger children, and they are not fully familiar with what pupils of this age can do. The school is providing good support and pupils' progress is improving. However, there is more work to do to ensure more capable pupils are consistently challenged and to improve on the average standards pupils reach by the time they leave school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4, so that pupils work at a brisk enough pace and that teachers have high enough expectations of what more capable pupils can achieve.
- Strengthen the leadership roles of the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators so they have more impact upon pupils' progress across the school.
- Ensure all teachers use the information from assessments fully, to help them plan work that moves pupils on more quickly in their writing and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children enter the school with broadly typical standards. They make satisfactory progress in Reception and most children reach the goals for children of this age by the time they leave the Reception base.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, taking into account their starting points and capabilities. However, the best progress occurs in Year 2 because teaching is good. Standards in the national tests, at Year 2, have improved significantly over recent years and were significantly above average last year. Currently, standards in Year 2 are above average. This group entered the school with better standards than are normally the case, showing their progress has been satisfactory overall. The school has correctly identified that pupils could be doing even better in writing and mathematics, particularly the more capable pupils.

Standards are average by the time pupils leave in Year 4. Local authority data clearly shows that pupils in Year 3 and 4 have not made sufficient progress in mathematics and writing since they were in Year 2. Good strategies have been introduced to improve standards in these two areas. Assessments are being used to establish whether pupils are making enough progress and challenging targets are being set. The school is focusing effectively on making sure more capable pupils make enough progress. However, at the moment, their progress is not yet consistent across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have positive attitudes. They enjoy school and work hard. They are friendly and polite and give visitors a warm welcome. They get on well with one another and behaviour is good. Pupils' attendance is good.

Pupils respond well to the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual provision is a particularly strong feature and an important part of school life. Pupils take a leading part in worship, in assemblies and church services and benefit from exploring topics such as forgiveness, poverty and ecological issues. They respect and value one another and see the good in each other's work. In one lesson, several pupils were full of praise for one boy who they all agreed was a very good artist.

Pupils know how important it is to have a healthy lifestyle and to stay safe in school and beyond. Members of the school council are very enthusiastic and pleased they can offer ideas. They have, for example, organised a friendship stop and playground equipment, to help prevent pupils feeling lonely or bored at playtimes. Pupils contribute to their school community in many ways and support charity events to help others. They make satisfactory progress in developing the skills they need for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and has some strong features. Teaching in the Reception base is well planned. Here, teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with the children. They promote children's personal development successfully.

Where teaching is good, and occasionally exemplary, lessons are well planned and organised, and teachers use a good variety of methods to keep pupils interested. A good example occurred in a lively Year 1 lesson, where pupils were making houses out of straws, pipe-cleaners and card. Teachers mark work carefully, to help pupils improve further. The school has identified certain groups of pupils who need an extra boost for a short while, to help them reach better standards. Effective teaching often occurs when teachers work with these targeted pupils. In these sessions, pertinent questions are used effectively to encourage pupils to think, tackle harder questions, solve number problems, or come up with more imaginative language.

In some lessons, the pace of learning is slower. Activities carry on for too long so pupils start to become distracted and teachers do not check carefully enough whether pupils understand their explanations. Sometimes, tasks are not interesting or challenging enough for pupils. They complete the work but not with enthusiasm.

Several teachers have moved year groups this year and have needed extra guidance and support to help them plan suitable work for the full range of pupils' capabilities. This is still developing and is one important reason why more capable pupils do not always make enough headway in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory and enables pupils to make sound progress. Children cover all the necessary areas of learning in the Reception base.

The curriculum is adapted well for groups of pupils who need additional support, so that any gaps in their understanding can be filled. Pupils in Year 4 are working successfully with the English co-ordinator to improve their writing. The curriculum is also being adapted to help more capable pupils work at the right level. This is working well in mathematics, particularly in Year 2. However, the curriculum does not cater well enough for more capable pupils because they are sometimes given work that they find quite easy.

The curriculum is enriched by interesting themed weeks and through visitors and visits, which help to broaden pupils' learning and boost their enjoyment of school. For example, younger pupils observe wildlife close to school whilst older pupils visit the Mary Rose. The school provides an interesting range of clubs but the school feels it cannot meet the requirement of teaching swimming because of lack of local facilities.

The one hour allocated for physical education each week is light but the school is working on extending this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive good personal support and guidance. All staff play an important part in creating a happy and supportive atmosphere in which children can learn. This is an important factor in pupils' enjoyment of school. Arrangements for health and safety and child protection are good. Pupils feel safe and know they can ask any adult for help. There are good links with the pre-school and middle school, so children settle in well to Reception and have a smooth transition at the end of Year 4.

Academic guidance is not yet as effective as the provision for pupils' personal welfare but is rapidly improving. The school has developed the way it assesses pupils and checks their progress. The new tracking sheets are helpful and being used well. However, assessments are not yet used effectively by all teachers to plan suitably challenging work for more capable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher is providing good leadership. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and a committed staff team. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is bringing about improvements in a sensitive yet purposeful way. Parents' and pupils' views are sought and valued. Parents are supportive of the school's leadership and pleased that the school welcomes their views.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and satisfactory progress is being made in improving performance. In addition there has been a good focus on some key areas that require improvement. Standards in mathematics, for example, dipped over the last three years but several strategies have been introduced that are helping pupils to do better. Releasing the English and mathematics co-ordinators to work with targeted pupils in Year 4, is having a positive effect upon standards in writing and mathematics. A good start has also been made on using assessments to set targets, and on checking progress regularly.

Leaders and managers at all levels are beginning to have a greater influence on pupils' learning and progress. The roles of the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators in monitoring pupils' progress are developing well but are not yet having sufficient impact upon pupils' progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Governors, whose role is currently satisfactory, are gaining a greater awareness and understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses through the better information being provided. The school is in a good position to bring about further improvement although some recent plans have not yet had sufficient time to impact fully on pupils' progress.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children

As you know, we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing all about your school. Thank you for talking to us, helping us and giving us such a friendly and warm welcome. We wanted to write to you so that you would know what we thought about your school.

These are some of the good things that we found:

- You have a good headteacher who is working really hard to help you learn and do well
- You enjoy school and work hard
- You are kind to one another and look out for each other
- Many of you are working really hard, and Beech base are doing especially well and making good progress.

We think the school could work on a few things, to help you learn even better:

- We think that some children, especially those who find some of the work easy, could manage harder work sometimes
- We have asked your deputy headteacher and teachers in charge of subjects, to carry out more checks to make sure you are doing well in all classes
- We have also asked teachers to make sure that, after marking your work and deciding how good your learning is, they plan work that helps you to improve as much as possible, especially in writing and mathematics.

Thank you once again for welcoming us to your school.

With best wishes

Margaret Dickinson