



# Cutcombe Church of England First School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 123831  
**LEA** Somerset  
**Inspection number** 281572  
**Inspection dates** 10 November 2005 to 10 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** David Clegg RISP

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Wheddon Cross
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Minehead
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9		Somerset TA24 7DZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01643 841462
<b>Number on roll</b>	23	<b>Fax number</b>	01643 841462
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Sean Walsh
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maureen Best

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 9	<b>Inspection dates</b> 10 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281572
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

The school is very small and serves an isolated rural community. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. In the past year a larger than usual proportion of pupils have left or joined the school at different times

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils thrive and do well. The small number of pupils, and the very favourable number of adults, results in pupils having plenty of individual attention.

Good quality provision makes sure that children in the Reception Year do well. Virtually all children reach, or exceed, the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. The good progress continues throughout the school and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4 they are well prepared for the next stage. They have a good level of basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils are also well prepared personally. For the most part they enjoy school and have positive attitudes to work. However, the attendance level of a small group of pupils is too low despite the school's efforts to encourage better attendance.

The teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils, whatever their ages and abilities. There is a deep level of understanding about the needs of each pupil and this guides the work of the school. However, marking is weak because it does not give pupils any indication about what they need to do to get better. Consequently, pupils are not clear about how well they are doing in meeting their learning targets.

The school knows itself very well. Its own evaluation of providing a good quality education is accurate. The way the school is led and managed is well matched to the size of the school. There is a strong emphasis on teamwork and cooperation at all levels. The school is a happy and harmonious community. It has moved on successfully since the last inspection and made the necessary improvements. The costs of the school are high but the value for money is satisfactory.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of marking so that pupils have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to get better
- continue to improve the rate of attendance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. They make good progress from a reasonable base of skills and almost all reach the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. Many children go beyond the expected levels and have already started on Year 1 work before they have finished the Reception Year.

The good progress continues and pupils achieve well. Although standards vary from year to year, it is rare for a child not to achieve at least average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Often pupils reach good standards, particularly in reading and mathematics. In Year 3, pupils make steady progress that picks up speed in Year 4 so that pupils move on to their next school with a good grounding in the basic skills

of literacy and numeracy. They are well equipped to take advantage of their new schools and meet challenging targets.

The capacity to give one-to-one support, and the effective use of trained assistants, particularly benefits pupils with learning difficulties and helps them to achieve well. There is a surprisingly high turnover of pupils, but the school copes well with new arrivals. They are quickly helped to settle in and start achieving well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils generally have good attitudes to school and most pupils spoke enthusiastically about how much they enjoy their lessons. Comments such as 'I don't want to leave' and 'teachers make lessons fun' are testament to how much they like what the school offers. Attendance levels are generally good but a small minority of pupils have more erratic attendance which hinders their progress. Behaviour is good. One or two pupils find it difficult to settle down and get on with their work quickly, but these incidents are dealt with effectively. The school successfully helps pupils to mature and develop personally. The small number of pupils encourages a genuine 'family feel'. They make successful relationships and have a strong sense of right and wrong. They have a good sense of the rural environment. Trips out, to places as far as Bristol, and visitors to school add to the cultural experiences pupils are given.

Most pupils have a good understanding about healthy eating. They know they should eat fruit and vegetables and they also have some awareness of keeping themselves safe. As it gets dark early one girl was very clear about the need to 'wear something bright at night!' Children make decisions about how the school is run through the school council. They also know about contributing to the local community and have recently produced a visitor's guide to the local church. The children show a good range of skills for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching is enhanced by the very favourable ratio of pupils to teachers and assistants. The high number of adults gives the school the capacity to respond rapidly to any signs of pupils not doing as well as they should. The experienced and trained teaching assistants are used very effectively to provide extra help to pupils who need it, often on a one-to-one basis.

Teachers cope well with the mixed-age classes. They plan carefully to make sure that the work is meeting the needs of all pupils. When they teach, they focus attention on particular groups of pupils, making sure that the work is taking account of what pupils have already learned. There are particularly good assessment procedures that help teachers to keep a track of how well pupils are doing. The information is used sensibly to pick up on any concerns and target extra support.

The good assessment procedures, however, do not include good marking. Marking is usually positive but there is not enough guidance given to pupils themselves about what to do to improve. This results in them not being clear about how to improve their work.

The sensible use of teachers' own interests and expertise makes the best use of resources. This helps to make sure that all pupils benefit equally from specialist teaching in subjects such as music and art and design. This results in lessons in these subjects being popular with the children.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school offers a rich range of experiences. The work often picks up on the rural environment, making good use of it to study nature and the changing seasons. The school is also keen to widen pupils' experiences and takes trips to places in the locality. The school welcomes visitors and has, for instance, worked with local artists. The school also works closely with other local schools and this helps to extend the range of opportunities open to pupils.

The small number of pupils and relatively high number of adults means that the school offers specific work to meet individual needs. This is very helpful for pupils who may need to do some catching up and ensures that they do as well as they can.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

All the staff know pupils very well. Children's well-being is central to the work of the school. There is a very high level of understanding about the needs of individual pupils. Teachers are very good at keeping up with how each child is doing and what they need to do next. However, pupils have surprisingly little knowledge about how well they are doing and how they could do better. Despite them having learning targets, pupils struggle to talk about what they need to do to improve, beyond saying 'doing more'.

Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are secure. The nature of the school results in very close contact between home and school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The manner in which the school is led and managed is completely in tune with the nature of the school. There is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration. The fact that all the teachers, on occasions, teach all the pupils gives them a shared concern for the needs of each child.

The school knows itself well and is frank and open about what may be improved. For example, the current work to improve some aspects of children's writing is well founded. It was quickly picked up through the regular assessments of pupils. This work is resulting

in teaching that is focusing sharply on the specific needs of individuals and is already leading to some improvements.

The leadership and management are very aware of the potential difficulties that being such a small school can create. The small year groups and small classes can create problems both in terms of pupils' personal development and in limiting the experience that the school can offer. One reason for its success is because the school is awake to such problems, and takes successful steps to minimise them. Governors are supported and committed and play a full part in the life of the school.

Resources are skilfully managed to take account of children's needs. This results in, for instance, teaching assistants working with individual pupils to make sure that they achieve as much as possible.

The school is in constant touch with parents and pupils. Parents play a vital role in the school and are overwhelmingly positive about what it offers their children. The following are just two comments made by parents: 'I can honestly say that I couldn't have wished to find a better school' and the 'school has made the first five years at school a pleasure'.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Cutcombe First School Wheddon Cross Minehead Somerset TA24 7DZ

11 November 2005

Dear children,

Thank you very much for helping me to find out about your school when I visited earlier this month. I enjoyed my day in school. I am writing to you to let you know what I think about how well you are doing. These are the main things about the school that I found were good:

- it is good that so many of you enjoy your lessons and work hard
- I think your lessons are helping you to do well. Some of you told me you were learning as much as you could
- most of you behave very well and it was so nice to see you working and playing together
- you told me, and I agree, that you are safe and well looked when you are at school
- the people who run the school are doing a good job.

For the school to get even better I think there are two things that need to be done:

- you need to be told more about how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work
- some children need to try to attend school more regularly so that they do not miss out on lessons.

Yours sincerely,

David Clegg Visiting Inspector