

Dunster First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123643
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292731
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Butterworth
Headteacher	Peter Hoyland
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2002
School address	13 St George's Street Dunster Minehead TA24 6RX
Telephone number	01643 821254
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small first school in the village of Dunster. Over half of the school's pupils come from outside its catchment area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than average and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

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 with a number of outstanding features; the headteacher's leadership is one. Very clear direction for the school is set through shared values which encourage pupils to 'expect the best in everything and to play their part in achieving it'. Pupils live up to this mission statement, so pupils' achievement is good and their standards are above average in Year 2 and above those expected in Year 4.

The good curriculum provides many opportunities for personal qualities to develop. The excellent care, guidance and support provided by adults in the school ensure that all pupils enjoy taking full advantage of these. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding which prepares them well for their future lives. One pupil felt very well prepared to move to his next school because his 'confidence had been brought out'. Pupils' understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is excellent. They play actively, and their eating habits have improved significantly in response to the promotion of healthy eating in school. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school community where, as a parent typically said, 'they know everyone and feel happy'. Pupils demonstrate their ability to take responsibility and lead younger ones. There is 'busyness' as they go about their learning which results in enjoyment of a very purposeful atmosphere.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Well planned lessons meet the varying needs of pupils and there is good liaison between adults in the classroom to ensure that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well met. Occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged enough by the level of work set or the expectations of the teacher. The good assessment and marking of pupils' work gives good guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. There is exceptional practice in the setting of literacy targets for older pupils and the very specific feedback they receive on their progress. In some classes, the feedback in marking is general, rather than specific to the child and subjects.

The school's good leadership and management ensure regular evaluation of its work. The views of all those involved are considered important and this leads to change which is accepted and valued. For example, pupils and parents indicated that they felt playtimes could be improved. All members of the community were involved in providing equipment, seating and staff training. Playground pals and activity led play were introduced. This has resulted in improved behaviour, healthier activities and fewer accidents. Improvement since the last inspection and capacity for further improvement are good because the school's relentless cycle of review ensures that it is constantly moving forward and improving. The Foundation Stage has improved in all aspects of its work and its overall effectiveness is now good. The school builds excellent partnerships with a wide range of organisations to support its work. This includes very strong partnership with parents. One typical parent's view of his child's experience sums this up: 'She has felt valued, cared for and safe in her school. We have had a wonderful time.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the most able pupils of all ages are always fully challenged by their work and teachers' expectations.
- Ensure that the exceptional quality of target setting, assessment and feedback, which is happening for older pupils in literacy, is consistently applied in numeracy and in all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above those expected by the time they leave the school. Children enter the school with abilities typical for those expected of their age although their levels of communication and language skills are lower. They make good progress through the Reception class. By the time they enter Year 1 the gap between skills in communication and mathematics has narrowed because of a good emphasis on speaking and language skills. Pupils make good progress through the rest of the school. National test results for Year 2 indicate that there is some variation between standards reached by different cohorts of pupils. In 2006, test results were broadly average which represents good progress for those pupils because of their lower starting point in Reception. The most able pupils attain above average standards, but there are a few occasions when their work does not quite fully challenge them and they achieve less than they might. The school has very limited experience of pupils at an early stage of learning English. When faced with this eventuality, the school responded extremely well with considerable support. As a result, exceptional progress was made.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The great majority of pupils feel safe at school and show a good level of concern for the safety and well-being of others. They value the opportunities that the school council and circle time give them to share their feelings. Pupils are confident that adults will help them when they need it. Pupils enjoy school immensely, taking advantage of all it has to offer. As a result attendance is outstanding. Behaviour is good, built on pupils' understanding of the school's five golden rules and acceptance of rewards and praise. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is reflected in pupils' responses to Arts Week where a greater awareness of other countries and cultures is promoted. An outstanding contribution is made by pupils to the school, local and international community. Considerable amounts of money are raised for charities. Pupils work well in cooperation with each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are at least good throughout the school and there is some that is outstanding. Learning objectives are shared with pupils, and teachers make expectations very clear. Work in class is generally well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. However, there are some occasions when the most able pupils could be presented with a personal challenge to include particular features in writing, for example, or solve a mathematical problem. The support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well targeted in the classroom and teaching assistants ensure that pupils are able to access the full curriculum. Assessment procedures are particularly good for literacy in Year 4. Plans are in place to spread this good practice to other areas of the school. Marking is good but in some situations is general and does not relate to a pupil's target or the lesson's learning objectives. Good links are established with parents to support pupils' learning at home. Standards in reading have improved as a result of the close liaison established between home and school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection. Interactive whiteboards are used well by teachers in the classroom to enliven pupils' learning. Pupils of all ages confidently use computers for research and to enhance the presentation of their work. However, the planning for this is not consistent, so, for example, a pupil may learn a skill but then not have the opportunity to practise. The curriculum promotes healthy and safe lifestyles effectively through regular physical education (PE) and swimming. All pupils leave the school as swimmers. The DASH club makes a significant contribution towards its members 'doing activity and staying healthy'. There is a good programme of enrichment activities like the school's Arts Week which culminates in the production of an artefact for the school. A programme of extra-curricular activities attracts almost all older pupils to take part over the school year, enhancing achievement and enjoyment.

The curriculum in Reception has been strengthened since the previous inspection. Careful planning ensures a programme of active and stimulating activities. Individual needs are well met and there is a good balance of adult led and child directed activities. The well resourced classroom and outdoor play area provide a large space which is well used. Good use is made of the local community, school fields and garden and Exmoor to enrich activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral care and support for pupils are outstanding and lead to pupils' very positive personal development and feelings of well-being. There is a strong emphasis on promoting safe and healthy lifestyles. This is demonstrated by the very healthy menus which are enjoyed in the school dining room. Adult support before school and at playtimes encourages pupils to take full advantage of breaks from learning. Very effective procedures for child protection and health and safety are in place, and these are regularly reviewed and updated. Pupils are effectively guided in their learning by the setting of individual targets for literacy and numeracy. The school is striving to personalise these and to provide pupils with appropriate guidance and support to achieve them. This is happening very well in literacy for older pupils but is not so well developed in numeracy and for other age groups. Pupils receive helpful guidance on their transfer to middle school and feel more confident because of it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's very effective leadership style ensures that all those involved in the school's work share a collective vision. There is a willingness amongst staff to learn from others within and outside the school in pursuing their strong commitment to provide care and education of a high quality. All members of the school's staff are fully involved in the school's development plans. The school's performance and work are monitored systematically and evaluated carefully so the school's leaders have a good view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Over the last year, leaders in Reception and the main school have effectively introduced new systems for tracking pupils' progress. The school is beginning to use this additional information well to support its evaluation in identifying areas for development and improvement. The school has a committed governing body which provides effective support and challenge. Governors

are linked to subject areas and play an active role in review. As a result of these links they have an accurate understanding of the school's work. They have played a significant part in establishing improved links with the main pre-school provider. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Strong links are now established with pre-school providers and this ensures that the children's induction to the school is effective.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

The headteacher's very effective leadership style ensures that all those involved in the school's work share a collective vision. There is a willingness amongst staff to learn from others within and outside the school in pursuing their strong commitment to provide care and education of a high quality. All members of the school's staff are fully involved in the school's development plans. The school's performance and work are monitored systematically and evaluated carefully so the school's leaders have a good view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Over the last year, leaders in Reception and the main school have effectively introduced new systems for tracking pupils' progress. The school is beginning to use this additional information well to support its evaluation in identifying areas for development and improvement. The school has a committed governing body which provides effective support and challenge. Governors are linked to subject areas and play an active role in review. As a result of these links they have an accurate understanding of the school's work. They have played a significant part in establishing improved links with the main pre-school provider. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Strong links are now established with pre-school providers and this ensures that the children's induction to the school is effective.