

Christ Church CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123757
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292775
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoff Burgess

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 on roll	
School	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Hampton
Headteacher	S Bullmore
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2007
School address	Feltham Lane Frome BA11 5AJ
Telephone number	01373 463781
Fax number	01373 453218

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school serving an area with significant social deprivation in the town of Frome. Almost all pupils come from this area and are of White British origin with English as their first language. Pupil mobility is low. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. A high proportion of pupils, about 40%, have learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). The school has a Nurture Group for pupils who have social and emotional difficulties. It also hosts and manages a combined children's and healthy living centre which includes the school's Nursery class led by the deputy headteacher. This was recently inspected and judged to be outstanding in all aspects. Attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes is very low.

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 which serves its local community extremely well. Parents are full of praise for the support they and their children receive, the enthusiasm and approachability of teachers, and the willingness of all staff to 'talk about anything'. A parent comments, 'Going to Christ Church is like having an extended family'. Pupils are very proud of their school saying they feel 'safe and special'.

Most children start school with very poor skills and knowledge. Despite excellent provision in the Nursery and Reception classes, few reach expected levels at the end of their first year in school. Many need help with their learning throughout their time in school. The challenge of the sheer number of pupils involved and the complexity and extent of their needs is met daily with great professionalism, warmth and care. The school's efforts to value and include all pupils are outstanding as shown by the exceptional work of the nurture group. An appreciative parent says how, without it, she is not sure how her son would have coped with school life. The care, support and guidance provided to pupils and parents by the school are outstanding.

Although standards in Year 4 are below average, this represents considerable progress and overall achievement is good. An excellent start in the Foundation Stage and sound progress in Years 1 and 2 provide pupils with strong foundations. These are well built on in Years 3 and 4 where pupils make good, and sometimes very good, progress. This is much helped by the high priority the school places on developing pupils' personal and social skills and ensuring their well-being from their first days in school. Pupils make tremendous progress in this area and well before they reach Year 4, their personal development and well-being are good. They love school, behave exceptionally well, take on responsibilities confidently and know how to stay healthy, fit and safe.

The curriculum is exceptionally good. Staff make every effort to provide activities which match the diverse needs and interests of their pupils. Inspectors agree with parents who say they are 'very impressed with the wide and varied range of activities provided'. Teaching is good overall and excellent in the Reception class but the school recognises that some teaching is not as effective in the infant classes. Very effective learning support assistants make a vital contribution especially in supporting pupils who find learning or conforming difficult and, as a result, these pupils make excellent progress. Parents compliment the staff on the 'fantastic' way they work together as a team and on being 'passionate about teaching'. Excellent communications between teachers and parents add greatly to the trust and the learning partnership the school strives to foster.

Sustained good leadership and management have seen the school prosper and its reputation in the local community grow. Improvement since the last inspection has been very impressive. The remarkable development of the Key Centre is a very good example of the drive and enterprise of the school's leadership in its quest to meet the needs of the community it serves. Ambitious plans to use the opportunity to further develop the school show that it still has the will and ability to keep improving. However, a high turnover of governors has reduced their effectiveness recently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement by ensuring all teaching is consistently good throughout the school.
- Help governors in their efforts to fulfil their role more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average. Children start school with exceptionally low standards especially in their language development. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very high and a significant number each year have considerable difficulty learning and/or coping with school. Pupils make very good progress in the Foundation Stage but most start Year 1 still well behind in their literacy and numeracy skills. Steady progress is made in Years 1 and 2. National test results show that in the recent past, standards have been well below average in Year 2 which matches the present picture. However, the school's records and pupils' recent work show that the school's hard work in the younger classes in developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem comes to fruition in Years 3 and 4. Here, pupils make good progress and begin to catch up with pupils elsewhere.

Pupils' achievement is good as shown by the good progress they make from very low standards when they start school to below average standards when they leave in Year 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make extremely good progress towards their learning targets. This is very evident in Year 3 which, after poor national test results in 2006, has seen a great improvement across the ability range thanks to very good provision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's warm, caring environment ensures that all pupils make very good progress in developing their personal and social skills from a very low base. They have an excellent start in Reception where children learn to play together and share equipment. Pupils' behaviour and relationships in and around the school are often exemplary. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory and the school does all it can to improve it. Pupils are gaining a good understanding of healthy eating and the need to exercise regularly. The wide range of social and emotional programmes offered enables them to think carefully about staying safe. Older pupils demonstrated their good knowledge and understanding of safety during a presentation to parents, carers and the rest of the school about their recent residential trip. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community by being involved in interviews for new staff, raising money for charities and taking part in community projects. Learners develop appropriate skills, including teamwork, verbal skills and the use of computers, which prepare them for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good but variable with a patch of slower learning in Years 1 and 2. However, the behaviour, positive attitudes and good work habits developed, especially in the Reception class, give pupils the confidence and self-esteem for their learning to accelerate as they get older. This starts to show itself in Year 2 and develops rapidly in Years 3 and 4 where learning is good and sometimes very good. Work is carefully planned to meet the needs of each child. However, where learning is slower, tasks are less fine-tuned. With so many pupils with diverse and challenging needs, teaching is very much a team effort and the quality of work by learning

support assistants working with groups and individuals is extremely good. The teaching for pupils with learning difficulties is strong.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Activities provided for children in the Foundation Stage are outstanding. An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' learning. Pupils are given as wide a range of experiences as possible with a high emphasis on promoting the arts. Local art galleries, theatres, artists and musicians regularly provide interesting and stimulating activities. The local environment is used well with Forest School providing pupils with lots of opportunities to develop their emotional and social skills. Older pupils learn French and regular 'Theme Weeks' enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils thrive in a warm, friendly, caring atmosphere in which all individuals are made to feel important. High quality monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress results in effective target setting, and in pupils themselves understanding what they are aiming for. It also ensures that everyone has a deep understanding of the often complex needs of pupils so that the school can provide very specific high quality support and guidance where needed. The school's very productive use of outside agencies enhances this support. The close partnership with the Key Centre enables the school to help families with all aspects of childcare and health. Very thorough procedures help children new to school to settle in quickly.

The school goes to great lengths to be certain that its outstanding range of procedures for nurturing, protecting and safeguarding pupils ensures their well-being. In the nurture group, pupils learn to cope in a carefully managed, safe environment. A room is available during lunchtime for pupils who find these times difficult to cope with. Support groups run by staff and outside agencies give pupils the opportunity to discuss concerns or anxieties in private.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Sustained high quality leadership by the headteacher, very ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, has seen the school become the focal point of an innovative and very exciting learning community centre focused on the needs of children, their parents and the local community. A parent aptly describes them as a 'committed and dynamic team'. The outstanding care and support provided by the combination of the Key Centre and the school already ensures that pupils get the best possible start to their education. None of this could have happened without excellent partnerships with the local community, the voluntary sector and private providers. The governing body was also very important in this process but with many changes of personnel recently, governors are working hard to get back up to speed.

Other partnerships, such as that with the local school federation in which the school has played a lead role, have been very important in its development. The leadership of various aspects of the school, such as the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, the Foundation Stage and the nurture group, is very effective. Very effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work ensure that leaders are always aware of what

needs to be done and of the impact of their actions. However, staff changes and sickness have restricted the impact of work to improve progress in Years 1 to 2. Excellent communications make life easier for everyone. The school is very well run.

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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
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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	1
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	3
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	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	1
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	2
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	1
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Christ Church C of E First School, Frome, BA11 5AJ

Mrs Franklin and I would like to say how much we enjoyed the two days we spent with you. We were really impressed with the way everybody smiles and gets on so well together. It is easy to see why you really enjoy your time in school. Like you, we think that Christ Church is a good school.

These are the good things we found:

- You behave exceptionally well, enjoy learning, work hard and do your best.
- We know that you and your parents are grateful for everything the grown ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy and positive as possible.
- You know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- Your teachers and all the helpers are good at making sure you learn well. Because of this you make good progress.
- You enjoy having lots of extra and different things to do during and outside lessons.
- You and all the grown ups make everyone welcome at the school and include them in all there is going on.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good at making it possible for everyone to do their best.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Try to make all lessons as good as the best.
- Lots of the school governors are new and they need some help so they can make sure the school keeps on improving.

By now, your royal visitor will have been to open the Key Centre. We know she will have enjoyed herself and we hope you all enjoyed feeling very special for the day.

Yours faithfully

Geoff Burgess Lead inspector