

Midsomer Norton Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109080 |
| Local Authority | Bath and North East Somerset |
| Inspection number | 309870 |
| Inspection date | 29 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Christine Huard |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 347 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | David Evans |
| Headteacher | Damien Knollys |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 January 2005 |
| School address | High Street Midsomer Norton Radstock BA3 2DR |
| Telephone number | 01761 412289 |
| Fax number | 01761 415896 |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of measures taken to support progress in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, particularly in writing and mathematics; the success of the new behaviour policy in eradicating bullying; and, the effectiveness of leadership and management in the Foundation Stage.

Evidence was gathered from an examination of the school's documentation, parents' questionnaires and pupils' work, observations of pupils in classes, around the school and in the playground, as well as interviews with members of the senior management team, pupils, governors and parents.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils attend this large primary school from the local area. Nearly all pupils are of White British descent. The headteacher took up post in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Midsomer Norton Primary is a good school. It provides a good education for its pupils in a stimulating learning environment. The school is aspirational for its pupils. It states, 'The vision we share is of a child leaving our school equipped with a diversity of skills and qualities to face the challenges of a complex world.' This underpins the whole ethos and ensures the curriculum followed is comprehensive, exciting and motivating. Parents are very supportive of the school. One comment reflects the views of many, 'All the staff do their best for our children to ensure the experience is a good one and they reach their full potential.'

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes receive a good start to their education because teachers match activities well to their needs in an exciting learning atmosphere. Positive actions have been taken to raise standards in children's language and mathematical development and, as a result, they are now making good progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in mathematics and reading and achieve well. Standards in writing are lower. This is because pupils' presentation and spelling skills are not good enough. The school is taking appropriate actions to address these weaknesses but, as yet, they have not had a significant impact on standards. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good progress and achieve well, reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science.

When visiting each classroom, it was evident from the excellent behaviour and enthusiastic responses that pupils greatly enjoy their education. The school lays a great emphasis on pupils being fully involved in their own learning. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn. Resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used skilfully by teachers and pupils alike. This collaboration helps make explanations clearer and lessons more interesting. Classroom management and organisation are particularly strong and teachers plan a good range of activities that enable all pupils to be purposefully employed even when not directly supervised. 'We're pushed to the limit', was the dramatic response by one pupil when asked if teachers gave challenging tasks. However, he and his friends bubbled with enthusiasm as they went on, 'They really help us to reach much higher levels than we thought we could.' Pupils respond to questions thoughtfully and are encouraged to explore and share ideas with their 'talk partners'. They assess how well they have learned at the end of each lesson, and sometimes assess how successful their friends and peers have been in their learning. Teachers assess work carefully and use the information gained to plan future work that is well matched to pupils' differing needs. Older pupils say marking helps them to understand what they need to do to improve further.

It is evident from walking round the school that there is a stimulating and vibrant curriculum. Lively and exciting displays of pupils' work bring the school to life and are evidence of the way in which pupils' achievements are valued and celebrated. Learning themes embrace many disciplines. Topic themes that focus on, for example, life in Africa or China ensure that pupils are gaining an excellent awareness of other cultures. Outstanding enrichment activities such as 'Retreat Week', where pupils have the opportunity to learn skills they would not otherwise experience, such as massage, and a wide range of visits and visitors all serve to enrich pupils' learning. An excellent programme for the personal, social and health education of the pupils contributes effectively to their outstanding personal development.

The pupils are extremely well nurtured, and the care and concern that are provided for them on a day to day basis are outstanding. Parents were grateful to be consulted about a new

behaviour policy, which is easily understood and has been effective in stamping out the few instances of poor and anti-social behaviour. Both their personal and academic development are very carefully monitored from the time pupils enter the school. Targets set are challenging and regularly reviewed. Pupils are confident that there is always someone they can talk to about problems; and they do get sorted out. Many parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities commented on the very good support that their children receive from the school and the helpfulness and approachability of staff in sorting out any problems or concerns.

Pupils learn and play together in a harmonious atmosphere. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones in the playground and ensure that all those who want to play have the opportunity. Pupils are thoughtful and responsive in class, and reflect maturely on their learning and the experiences they have. They have an excellent understanding of the need to feel and stay safe and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils enthuse about the wide range of playground activities and how the school council keeps the range of activities and equipment constantly under review. They chatter knowledgeably and excitedly about the meaning of a healthy lifestyle, and are proud of the help that Bath rugby club has given them with their diet and fitness training. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying. They recognise that they have a responsibility to others and proudly relate their involvement in local and national charity fundraising activities. The school councillors are very active, take their roles very seriously, and have a mature outlook in considering how they can make things better for the school and its pupils. Pupils are very aware of contemporary environmental concerns and have recently gained their 'Eco Schools' bronze award. Pupils' well developed skills in numeracy and literacy and in collaborative working provide a good preparation for the next stage of their education and later life.

The headteacher provides strong, supportive leadership. He has a clear vision for the direction of the school and this is shared by staff and governors alike. Staff and governors know how well the school is doing, and their self-evaluation is accurate. There is a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further and challenging targets have been set. There is a good capacity to bring about these improvements. The school uses data well to check its own performance and the monitoring system to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning is thorough and vigorous. The rigorous tracking systems enable the staff to identify problems and take action to address weakness promptly. This is reflected in the actions taken to improve mathematics, where standards have improved significantly. Management responsibilities have been distributed widely and curricular groups make a good contribution to school development. However, the Foundation Stage, although improving rapidly, is not yet working fully as a cohesive unit because it is without a designated leader. Teachers share good practice and are mutually supportive. The governors provide good support and challenge and are fully involved in the strategic development of the school. The school development plan provides a very good basis for ongoing improvement and is closely linked with the Every Child Matters agenda.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery class with the skills expected for their age. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress and are now on course to reach above average standards by the time they join Year 1. They have made good progress as a result of the increased emphasis on developing mathematics and literacy skills through exciting and practical activities which interest and motivate the children. Teaching is lively and stimulating and enables the children to learn effectively. Teachers make particularly good use of the outside area, planning

interesting activities to support all the areas of the early years curriculum. During the inspection, many children were happily involved in planting seeds and discussing how they would look after them in order for them to grow. There is a good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. Visits and visitors, as well as lively, interesting themes, make the curriculum and learning relevant and exciting. The care and attention given to children's welfare are very good. Children's progress is tracked carefully and those requiring extra support are quickly identified. However, although both year groups are doing well individually, there is a certain lack of cohesion between them. There is an unnecessary duplication of some procedures, such as those for assessment, as a result of there being no designated leader to pull things together.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' spelling and presentation skills, particularly in Years 1 and 2, in order to raise standards in writing.
- Improve the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage to ensure that the Nursery and Reception classes work as a cohesive unit rather than as two separate entities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| How good is 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 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Midsomer Norton Primary School, Midsomer Norton BA3 2DR

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you really enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. I think your school gives you a good education and is working hard to make it even better.

These are the things I liked best.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning.
- You are all doing well in English, mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- Teachers make learning interesting and fun for you, and you know how to improve your work from marking and target setting.
- You have an interesting and varied curriculum and the special activities arranged to enhance it are excellent – I particularly liked the sound of your 'Retreat Week'.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher and governors lead the school well and are very keen to make it even better.

There are two things that could be a little better.

- The spelling and handwriting of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not as good as they could be. You can help here by practising both at home.
- I would like to see a leader for the Nursery and Reception classes to help them work more closely together.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard to ensure that it stays as successful as it is now.

Very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Christine Huard Lead inspector