

Berkley Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123743
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314701
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Les Stather
Headteacher	Carole Brautigan
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2005
School address	Berkley Frome BA11 5JH
Telephone number	01373 830455
Fax number	01373 830455

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

the achievement of pupils and in particular the current progress being made by pupils of all abilities

arrangements to meet the needs of pupils in mixed-year classes

the effectiveness of the recently established leadership team.

Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and analyses of the school's working documents and the questionnaires completed by parents. Other aspects of the school were not inspected 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

The school is smaller than average. There are three classes each containing pupils from two year groups. Years 3 and 4 are taught in a class of 39 pupils. Very few of the pupils live in the rural area surrounding the school, with most coming from the nearby town of Frome. Almost all are White British and none is learning English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry is exceptionally varied but broadly as expected for pupils of this age although in the last two years, there has been a significant group above expectations. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average. The headteacher took up her permanent post in September 2007 after an extensive period as acting headteacher. Two other members of staff took on additional leadership responsibilities in September 2007.

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. Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. The new leadership team is building well on previous practice, with a clear focus and commitment to raise standards even further and provide pupils with stimulating experiences. There is a strong commitment to meet the needs of individual pupils, including those who are vulnerable and have complex problems. The overwhelming majority of parents appreciate the school's many qualities. One reflected the feelings of others by writing, 'My daughter loves going to school and always returns home excited about what she has learnt.' Another commented, 'Berkley School accommodates the individual circumstances of each child and family.' The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development based on careful analyses of performance. This has enabled it to make significant progress since the last inspection and it is well placed to improve further.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress in their first year in school, although some constraints within the accommodation limit the opportunities for them to develop their independence. Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities, maintain this good progress throughout the school. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 are consistently and significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also achieve well. A few of these older pupils attain high standards well above those expected nationally for their age, because of carefully targeted support recognising their gifts and talents in, for example, mathematics. Most pupils achieve well in science although standards are not as high as in English and mathematics.

All members of staff work effectively and sensitively to meet the needs of individual pupils. This effective care, guidance and support contributes to the pupils' good personal development and well-being. One parent wrote about the 'extra yard' gone by teachers to help her child with complex problems. Another commented, 'I feel the school has catered extremely well for his requirements by providing materials and additional support.'

Pupils smile a lot and clearly enjoy their time in school. Their attendance is above average and the school robustly follows up the very few whose attendance is poor. Pupils are thoughtful and sensitive about the needs of others and those less fortunate than they are. They have a satisfactory awareness of modern Britain's cultural diversity. They conscientiously help in running the school, for example, through serving on the Eco-committee. They are proud of their contributions, for example in helping the school gain the Eco Award, and are disappointed that the school council has not met for a while. Older ones care for the younger ones informally and when acting as play leaders or running special clubs. They all keenly participate in fundraising for local and national charities. Pupils are clear about how to take care of themselves, say they feel secure in school and are confident about approaching an adult if they have a problem. The school implements all the statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils. Pupils know about the importance of healthy life styles and enthusiastically demonstrate their fitness in the very active 'take ten' sessions and playtimes. The school recently received the Activemark award in recognition for its work in this aspect.

The good progress by pupils is a direct consequence of the effective teaching and learning in all three classes. A few parents are concerned about the size of the Year 3 / 4 class, but here, and in the other classes, teachers make good use of assessment information and plan very

thoroughly to ensure work set is matched to the different needs of pupils. This helps to motivate pupils and promotes good learning by them all, regardless of their ability. Governors and the headteacher ensure teaching assistants are available and deployed carefully so that all pupils, including those in the large class, receive individual attention and support when needed for both their academic progress and their personal needs. Teachers help pupils to think about their next steps in learning when they mark work with guidance about how they can improve. They are introducing ways of agreeing short-term targets for learning, but these are not prominent around the classrooms or clear in the minds of all the pupils. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and establish a good working atmosphere in lessons. In turn, pupils respond enthusiastically and are interested to learn more.

The school is reviewing the way the already stimulating curriculum is organised and plans to build on recent successful events such as the Giant Week and Healthy Schools week, when links were made across many subjects and pupils became immersed in collaborative and problem-solving tasks. Pupils' access to computers has recently improved so they can use them more frequently to help in their work in a range of subjects, such as investigating toys in history or holiday destinations in geography. These experiences are contributing to pupils' good level of skills needed for the next stage of education and adult life. The school works hard to overcome the lack of a hall and limited playground space, including the lack of a designated outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage. Pupils appreciate the good quality facilities and specialist teaching in physical education in the local leisure centre and the fitness trail and new picnic area on the field. The school is looking to extend the satisfactory range of clubs and visits so there is even more for pupils to experience.

The headteacher successfully involved staff and governors in a recent review of the school's vision and values, setting a clear direction for the school's future. Together with the recently extended leadership team, she has strengthened various processes to check the performance of the school, for example through detailed standards reports to governors, frequent visits to classrooms and checks on pupils' work. There are good procedures for assessing and recording most aspects of pupils' progress and these are used well to set challenging targets in English and mathematics. However, this information is not collated clearly enough to allow efficient tracking of progress by individuals or whole year groups during the year and from one year to the next. In addition, there is relatively little recorded information about progress and attainment in science. Governors fulfil their roles well. There are good systems for keeping them informed about the school and they take a lead in some strategic decisions such as developments in the accommodation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the sensitive induction programme that enables children to settle quickly into school from many different pre-school settings. Children make good progress in the six areas of learning, particularly in mathematical, physical and creative development. The teachers and teaching assistant work effectively with individuals and small groups, observing their responses and assessing their learning. The teachers use these assessments well and plan meticulously, providing a range of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. However, provision and progress is good rather than outstanding, because the opportunities for learning through independent play, particularly outside, are limited. Children are unable to move freely in and out of doors, because there is no designated outdoor area, and indoor activities have to be mindful of the needs of the Year 1 pupils who share the classroom. The school has plans

to create an external canopy but access to this will still need to be carefully regulated and it will not fully overcome the problem.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop clearer ways of presenting assessment information in order to track pupils' progress during the year and from year to year, and ensure the information collected includes progress in science.
- Improve the facilities and outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage so children have better opportunities to learn independently through play in a designated area.

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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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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?	2

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 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

19 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Berkley CE VA First School, Frome BA11 5JH

Thank you for the way you all made me feel very welcome when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to some of you, visiting your classrooms and seeing some of your work. I was particularly impressed by the way you all played together and helped look after each other on the playground on what was an exceptionally windy day. You were right to tell me that Berkley is a good school. Here are some of the highlights I found during the visit.

- You behave well and are thoughtful about how you can help look after each other and manage things around the school, for example as play leaders or members of the eco committee.
- You enjoy school and work hard in lessons. This helps you make good progress. Some of you do exceptionally well by the time you leave Berkley school.
- Your teachers and the teaching assistants plan work that is not too hard or too easy for you all and think of lots of interesting things for you to do, like the Giants week.
- Everyone who works in the school makes sure you are safe. They are very good at helping those of you who have problems from time to time.
- The headteacher has lots of ideas about how to improve the school and is supported well by the other teachers in developing these.
- Your parents are pleased you go to Berkley First School.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on two things to make the school even better.

- Develop clearer ways of tracking the progress you are making in your work during the year and from year to year, and ensure it includes progress in science.
- Improve the outdoor area for the Reception children so they can have more choice about what to do and when to play outside.

I know you will want to help the headteacher and you may well have your own ideas about how to improve the school further.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector

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