

Amesbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131215
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315754
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqui Lord
Headteacher	Ros Hart
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kitchener Road Amesbury Salisbury SP4 7AX
Telephone number	01980 623009
Fax number	01980 626727

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Amesbury School was formed from the amalgamation of two local schools and opened in September 2006. There has been considerable disruption to leadership and staffing and a significant amount of building work has been going on. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2008 and staffing is more settled, although the school site is still undergoing change. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and none of these is in the early stages of learning English. A few pupils are from families serving in the armed forces.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Amesbury is a satisfactory and improving school. During the short time the new headteacher has been in post she has accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development. The right priorities have been identified and some of these are already being addressed. This is having a positive impact and is providing a sense of purpose for both pupils and staff. As a result, the school has a sound capacity for further improvement. Although standards are below average, pupils are making satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make steady gains in relation to their individual targets. Pupils from families who serve in the armed forces make progress in line with that of their peers.

Good relationships have been newly established with the local church. This is helping to reinforce the Christian character of the school and enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Although children join the school with skills below, and sometimes well below, those expected nationally, they make good progress in the Reception Year. The emphasis on their personal and social development is particularly strong and effective. This continues throughout their primary years and results in positive relationships between pupils themselves and between pupils and adults. Knowing that adults have their best interests at heart, pupils feel valued. The school has worked hard to reform pupils' behaviour as a matter of urgency. As a result of the effective actions taken, behaviour has improved and is now mainly good. Alongside this, pupils' attitudes have improved. They enjoy coming to school and now want to learn, and this is helping their academic progress. Despite this, attendance is still below average but the school's rigorous procedures to tackle this are beginning to make a difference.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory, with some good features. However, tasks are not always correctly matched to pupils' needs. This sometimes causes insufficient challenge, particularly for those who are more able. As a result pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils are given targets to meet in English and mathematics but systems for this are not yet fully embedded. This means that pupils are not sufficiently clear about what they need to do to improve. Marking rarely refers to targets and does not give pupils enough information about what to do next.

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, is dynamic and well organised. She is very good at developing the skills of the staff, who are supportive and committed to improvement. However, those with key management posts are not yet playing a significant role in leading improvements in the areas for which they are responsible.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into school life and make a good start in Reception. Good links are made with parents and many value the opportunity to join in activities on Friday afternoons. A new system for setting targets for individual children is giving parents helpful guidance on what they can do to help with their learning. Relationships are warm and friendly, helping children to develop confidence and learn quickly. The curriculum is carefully planned and is appropriate to their needs. Children clearly enjoy the many good resources available, especially in the outdoor area. Assessments contribute to a useful record that tracks children's development,

informs planning for the next stage of learning and ensures good progress. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-chosen activities. However, at times there is not enough focus on what children should be learning through structured play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that tasks are always well matched to pupils' learning needs in order to raise standards and accelerate progress.
- Embed new procedures to make pupils more aware of their own progress in learning, and improve the quality of teachers' marking.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders and senior staff so they make a greater contribution to the school's strategic direction.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the school with skills below the levels expected for their age. Their communication, language and literacy and mathematical development is often particularly limited. Nevertheless, they make good progress and many are meeting the goals expected of them, and a few are exceeding these, by the end of the Reception Year.

Last year, pupils in other year groups did not make the progress they should and standards were well below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Since the beginning of this school year, pupils' progress has improved and it is now satisfactory. This is due to improved behaviour and attitudes as well as rigorous tracking that picks up any pupils who are not making the gains that they should. Standards are still below average but this represents sound achievement given pupils' starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy coming to school, socialise well together and demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning and all that the school offers. Pupils feel safe in school and know who to go to for help if they are in difficulty. They understand about the need for keeping fit and healthy, but despite this some choose to bring chocolate and sweets to eat at lunchtime. Members of the school council fulfil their role well, as do the play leaders who help younger children to learn new games during break times. There are modest opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities, show initiative and develop skills for the future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved. Their increased awareness of the need to consider others is having a beneficial impact on their behaviour and attitudes. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and establish good relationships with them. This provides a positive climate in which to learn. Teaching at the beginning of a lesson is often good. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards to motivate pupils and make certain they understand what they are to learn. Questioning skills are good and good strategies are used to ensure that everyone takes part in the lesson. Teachers plan thoroughly but some tasks do

not meet pupils' needs, especially the more able. These pupils do not always make as much progress as they could because sometimes their work is too easy. In some lessons there is an over-reliance on worksheets and text books which means that tasks are not as practical and exciting as they might be. Teachers' marking, although congratulatory, does not contain enough useful comments to help pupils to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The provision for the development of key skills in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and improving. The school is sensibly investigating ways to enliven the curriculum. A more creative approach is being adapted to capture pupils' interest by making better links across a range of subjects. Although much of this work is in the early stages, the use of information and communication technology to enrich learning is already having an impact. This was evident in a literacy lesson where pupils responded well when preparing to make a leaflet using the computer.

A good range of clubs is provided and these are popular with pupils. There is a reasonable range of visits and visitors but, as the school recognises, there is more to do to bring learning alive and make the curriculum more stimulating.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and well known to staff, who provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which to learn. Parents appreciate the caring atmosphere. One parent commented, 'The school has been very supportive with my child and myself.' The school works well with other agencies and the needs of learners most at risk are closely monitored. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons by a team of skilled teaching assistants. Those from minority groups and children from service families are well integrated and have full access to all that the school offers.

New assessment systems are now in place and this is helping teachers to plan next stages of learning to ensure that pupils make better progress. Although pupils have individual targets for English and mathematics, these are not being used consistently across the school. This means that the targets are not yet impacting strongly enough on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is a key strength and a driving force for improvement. She has worked tenaciously to improve provision since taking up post. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress have improved and the school is now able to identify and focus more effectively on those who need to make up lost ground. This is helping to accelerate progress.

At present, too much responsibility for monitoring the school's performance and for setting and achieving goals rests on the shoulders of the headteacher. Subject leaders do not have sufficiently rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating provision. This restricts their ability to target areas for improvement and further boost pupils' achievement. The senior management team is developing its role, but does not yet play a sufficiently influential part in

whole-school leadership and management. Nevertheless, there are signs of improvement and subject leaders and senior staff are keen to develop their roles. Staff share a determination to raise standards and make the school more effective.

The work of governors is sound and they have an increased understanding of data so they have a realistic view of the school's performance. A small minority of parents are concerned about the disruption caused by staff absence and its effect upon their children's progress. The school recognises their concerns and is already taking steps to strengthen communication systems to keep parents informed and bring about greater stability.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amesbury Church of England Primary School, Amesbury SP4 7AX

Thank you very much for the warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and talking to you. Your school provides you with a sound education.

These are some of the things we found.

- You work hard and make satisfactory progress by the time you move to secondary school.
- You enjoy coming to school and know what to do if there is a problem.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe.
- Your behaviour has improved and is good. Well done!
- You and your parents told us how well the school takes care of you, and we agree.
- Your headteacher is making sure that the school is improving every day.

We have suggested three things to make your learning even better.

- We have asked your teachers to make sure that the work that you are given is at the right level for you.
- We have also asked your teachers to make sure you know how to improve by using your targets and giving you clearer guidance when they mark your work.
- We would like all the staff who have whole-school responsibilities to play their part in improving the school still further.

You can help by really working hard on your targets.

Best wishes

Anna Sketchley Lead Inspector