

Warminster Sambourne Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126374
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	319541
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Rankine
Headteacher	Angela Reeves
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2007
School address	Sambourne Road Warminster BA12 8LF
Telephone number	01985 212458
Fax number	01985 218395

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a below average-sized primary school in the middle of a country town. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. When the school was inspected in February 2007 it was given a Notice to Improve because pupils, particularly the more able, were not achieving as well as they could and standards were too low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires a Notice to Improve. As a result of much better leadership and management it now provides a satisfactory quality of education. Senior managers ensure that the school has clear educational direction and that initiatives are effectively monitored. In a very positive move since the last report, subject and phase leaders make a strong contribution to school development planning. There is a renewed 'can-do' ethos which is raising expectations and driving up standards. The school's recent successful track record indicates that there is a good capacity for further development.

Standards have been improved to broadly in line with national averages by the time pupils leave, and more able pupils no longer underachieve. When considered in more detail, standards are average in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 but below average in writing. Higher up the school standards in English, although improving, are still below average. A recent emphasis on encouraging logical thinking skills is paying dividends. Standards have been raised to average in science and above average in mathematics at the end of Year 6. Pupils build on the good start they get in Reception and are now making sound progress throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because care and support are successfully geared to their needs.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are positive features, notably in questioning and how staff get pupils to think systematically. Much effort has been devoted recently to improving the quality of learning, with pupils actively involved in evaluating their own performance. However, teaching is not consistently good throughout the school and this sometimes restricts rates of progress. The curriculum is satisfactory and has a variety of good features, for example in science, but lacks links between subjects which would make learning more interesting and promote skills common to more than one area of learning.

This is a happy school. Strengths in pupils' personal development and good quality care, guidance and support reported in 2007 have been sustained. Attitudes continue to be positive and attendance is good. Pupils respond very well to the much-improved academic support that springs from teachers' adept marking and good use of assessment to set targets and measure progress. Although a few parents disagree, behaviour is good. This judgement balances the vast majority of pupils who behave well for most of the time with the few who sometimes cause problems. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to turn to when the need arises. Relationships continue to be a strength of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in Reception obviously enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn. They are well cared for and are given a good start to school life. Children make good progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development, because they are well taught and supported. Staff work very well as a team. They make accurate assessments of children's ability and progress and use this information effectively to cater for different needs. The children's standards when they enter the school vary from year to year, but attainment on entry is generally a little below what is expected, largely because of lower basic communication skills. They make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the time they enter Year 1, but skills in communication,

language and literacy continue to lag behind their other attainments. Although there are times when children spend too long listening, activities are well planned to give them a range of learning opportunities. Children are encouraged to make choices and take advantage of learning through a 'hands-on' approach. The minibeasts hunt was great fun as well as prompting lots of useful and colourful language! Relationships are excellent and children are very successfully encouraged to be aware of, and considerate to, other people. It is no wonder that children and parents are happy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, improving basic skills and providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their communication skills in writing for a variety of purposes.
- Use the good teaching evident in some classes as a model to improve the overall quality.
- Fine tune the curriculum to develop cross-curricular links which will make the most of learning opportunities.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress following their good start in Reception. This constitutes marked improvement on the findings of the last inspection. The underachievement of more able pupils in Years 3 to 6 has been overcome, with much better use of assessment data to raise expectations and challenge pupils at their appropriate levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities respond well to good support and make good progress.

Standards are average in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2. They are average in science at the end of Year 6. In what appears a quantum leap, achieved through careful analysis and an effectively targeted support programme, standards are now above average in mathematics. More able pupils do particularly well. In English, standards, despite continuing improvement, are still lower than average throughout the school. The weaknesses are in writing, particularly sentence construction and the use of imaginative vocabulary.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are enthusiastic, considerate, have a clear sense of right and wrong and usually behave well. They enjoy school and value the support they get from staff. One boy's remark that: 'Teachers look on the brighter side and will always try to help you' sums up the general positive feeling. Pupils are proud of the Healthy School and Activemark awards and can demonstrate a good understanding of what keeps them fit. They make a good contribution to the school community, readily taking part in setting rules and acting as monitors for equipment and as librarians. Pupils are suitably prepared for future study and life in general. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously, but they have too little opportunity to show initiative and influence school policy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good features in teaching, for example in Reception, Years 5 and 6 mathematics and Year 2 literacy, are at the heart of the improvements to standards and pupils' progress over the past year. Planning is good and this is the direct result of more effective leadership from subject coordinators. Good use of questioning to prompt pupils to reason before answering is backed up with accurate assessment and a successful move to draw pupils into evaluating their own progress. These are strengths of the most effective lessons. Nevertheless, teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because of inconsistency across the school. The most common weaknesses are when activities go on for too long, the pace of learning drops, classes are not well managed and where expectations are not high enough. This is more often the case (but not exclusively so) when classes are taken by staff other than their own teachers.

Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a good contribution to the quality of learning, especially for those pupils with learning difficulties and the few with disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in that it ensures all subjects are covered and that there is a sound range and number of enrichment opportunities. The Year 6 residential adventure trip to Osmington is very popular. Good curriculum features include planning in mathematics and science, a successful programme to support pupils' personal, social and health education and the very good use made of teaching assistants on placements from other countries. The learning environment is attractive and stimulating and the grounds are used well to support learning.

Improving the curriculum is one of the school's priorities. A recent good move has been to identify the skills needed to take learning further in core subject areas. This has worked most effectively in mathematics and science investigation and problem solving. However, there is a tendency for subjects to be taught in isolation. Opportunities are missed to explore links between curriculum areas to make use of, and promote, learning skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The last report found care, guidance and support to be good. This is still the case, with pupils' welfare well catered for. Safeguarding requirements are secure, although some minor areas for improvement have been drawn to governors' attention. Pupils feel safe and have confidence in teachers and teaching assistants. Pastoral care is good. Even those teachers new to the school know their pupils well. Academic support is good and much improved, with effective assessment procedures and use of data to highlight what the school and individual pupils need to do to make improvements. Pupils' own survey and detailed analysis of the effect teachers' marking has on their attitudes and work are leading to heightened expectations of both staff and pupils and are driving up standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Staff make a good team. They have collectively addressed the weaknesses identified in the Notice to Improve and have continued the good progress noted in the HMI follow-up visit. The school is now well led and managed through the good partnership of headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff. Self-evaluation is accurate, the school sets itself challenging targets and forward planning is visionary. As a consequence, the needs of all pupils are considered, the school's educational direction is clear and the future is effectively planned for. A small minority of parents do not think that communications between school and home are good enough. Inspectors do not find this to be the case. Nevertheless, a measure of the school's commitment to sustaining improvement is that managers have taken the initiative to review arrangements. Governance is satisfactory and governors continue to be supportive of the school. However, the relatively high turnover of governors (with some very recent appointments) has limited how effective the governing body has been in evaluating the school's performance. This is being addressed, making good use of local authority guidance.

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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	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?	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	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	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?	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	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

16 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Warminster Sambourne Church of England VC Primary School, Warminster BA12 8LF

Thank you for your warm welcome during the inspection. We were made to feel very much at home. We can see why you enjoy school and were impressed by your positive attitudes. A special thank you to the school councillors and those pupils who took the time to talk to us at lunchtime. You will be pleased to hear that the school is making good progress and no longer comes into the category known as Notice to Improve. Sambourne now gives you a satisfactory standard of education.

Here are some of the highlights.

- Children get off to a good start in Reception.
- You are being helped to grow up as sensible, caring young people.
- Staff take good care of you.
- Teachers are careful to show you how you can improve your work.
- The school is well run by a good team of staff successfully led by the headteacher and deputy.
- Those of you who have special learning needs make good progress because you are well taught and given good support.
- Despite the few times when some children let themselves down, your behaviour is good.

To continue its journey towards being a good school, Sambourne Primary should:

- help you to improve how well you can express yourself in your writing
- make sure that all lessons are taught as well as the best ones
- improve the way the curriculum is planned to make full use of your learning skills.

You can help by trying hard and doing your best. Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart Lead inspector

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Lead inspector