

Verwood Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113779
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	325882
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Janet Sinclair

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	302
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	B White
Headteacher	Adam Parsons
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Howe Lane Verwood BH31 6JF
Telephone number	01202 822652

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Inspection number	325882

Fax number

01202 822369

Age group 4-9

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Verwood is a larger than average sized first school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. These pupils have predominantly specific learning and speech and communication difficulties. Pupils are mainly White British, although a few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a small number are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school has Healthy School status and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which has improved greatly since its last inspection because of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. He is very ably supported by his assistant headteachers, subject leaders and the whole staff team, who are all fully committed to providing high quality education and care for all pupils. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and all it has to offer. This is shown in their happy, smiling faces, friendliness and excellent behaviour. They say that teachers are always ready to help them and their topics are great fun. Parents are rightly very pleased with the school and shower it with praise. They particularly mention the very positive impact of the headteacher. Comments such as, 'The headteacher has transformed the school. He has created a dedicated, enthusiastic and effective staff who all work together well as a team. My child loves every minute', and, 'this is a very special school' encapsulate parents' very many positive views.

Children make an excellent start in the Reception classes because of the very stimulating environment created and the outstanding attention given to their personal and academic needs. This flying start is built on very successfully across the rest of the school so that by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards are exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' outstanding progress is due to excellent teaching, rigorous tracking, conscientious monitoring and well-planned interventions to support those not making enough progress. Teaching is extremely effective because teachers fully engage pupils in their learning through interesting work, clear explanations and a strong focus on exactly what they expect pupils to learn. Occasionally, however, presentation of work, particularly in mathematics, is not given enough attention and this hinders accuracy. Provision for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. Their particular needs are quickly identified and interventions closely tailored to meet them. Outstanding academic guidance ensures all pupils are clear about what they do well and what they need to do to improve, and this ensures their full involvement in their learning. High quality care and an excellent curriculum fully support pupils' outstanding personal development and excellent progress. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the lively topics, some of which they choose themselves, as well as the many events, such as Roman Day, which enhance the curriculum. They take their responsibilities as school councillors and playtime leaders very seriously and are pleased with their efforts to support charities such as the RNLI. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to stay healthy and their very good attitudes to safety are supported by many initiatives to keep them safe, such as first aid training and visits from the community police.

Leadership is outstanding at all levels and underscores the school's excellent effectiveness. Self-evaluation is rigorous and there is a clear and effective focus on raising standards through systematic tracking combined with focused monitoring of teaching and learning. This has enabled the school to raise standards and maintain them at a very high level over the past three years. Governors provide strong leadership, acting fully as critical friends to the school, whilst fully celebrating its many successes. The school's excellent track record and exceptional improvement since the last inspection, when it was found to be satisfactory overall, indicate an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations. As a result of the outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make excellent progress so that standards are above average by the time they transfer to Year 1. Staff create an excellent learning environment where children's needs are paramount, enabling them to develop fully across the areas of learning. Children have many opportunities to follow their own interests both inside and out, for example, when building an underwater city or a swimming pool for the sharks as part of their topic. Teachers make excellent use of assessments to ensure that small-group, adult-led activities are tailored very carefully to children's needs, enabling progress to be maximised. Children thoroughly enjoy all the activities on offer and this is seen in their high levels of concentration and excellent behaviour. Staff promote children's welfare exceptionally well by providing a purposeful, calm and welcoming atmosphere where children feel safe and develop confidence and maturity as learners. Excellent leadership ensures clear direction with a strong focus on children's personal development and achievement within an exciting, well-thought-through learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve presentation of work, particularly in mathematics, as an aid to greater accuracy and clarity.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and have been over several years. They are exceptionally high at the end of Year 4. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and represents outstanding achievement for pupils. It is due to excellent teaching, careful tracking of pupils' progress and regular ongoing assessment to maximise learning. The progress of different groups is carefully monitored, ensuring that all pupils, including those who are gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have their needs fully met. Where pupils are not making enough progress, interventions are swift and specific to pupils' needs, ensuring very good progress is maintained.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding, with excellent attitudes towards each other and very strong moral values permeating all they do. There is a clear code of conduct, which pupils have helped to develop, ensuring their excellent behaviour. Pupils have extensive knowledge of keeping healthy and thoroughly enjoy physical exercise, including 'wake and shake' and sports clubs which they know contribute well to a healthy lifestyle, as does their daily fruit snack. Pupils show a particularly impressive understanding of safe practices. They display an outstanding regard for the well-being of others through their thoughtful behaviour towards each other, the support they give as positive play leaders and their confidence that they will get effective support from staff should they need it. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and their parents say that they 'can't wait to get to school'. Attendance is well above the national average, reflecting their strong enjoyment of all that is on offer. Pupils

make a very positive contribution to their school community. For example, school councillors have introduced 'welcome time' to promote a positive start to the school day. They have excellent links with the church, the town council and a special school. Pupils are very confident about moving on to the middle school because of their excellent basic skills and their experiences of cooperating with each other successfully in a wide range of situations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent across the school because teachers plan and organise lessons very well and fully challenge pupils through effective questioning, good subject knowledge and a clear focus on expected learning outcomes. Excellent marking and effective self-assessment ensure pupils are clear about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils have very good opportunities to share ideas through acting as 'talk partners' to each other in lessons and this helps to develop their ideas. It is also used well as a tool to develop their social and thinking skills as they work with a different partner each week. Pupils also learn about the skills needed to be a successful learner such as resilience, reflection and resourcefulness and consider which of these is relevant for particular tasks. Teaching assistants fully support pupils' learning through their effective work with small groups. Pupils fully enjoy their learning and are very keen and motivated. This was seen in an excellent lesson in Year 1 where they were involved in a variety of practical measuring activities, which caused a huge buzz of excitement and fully developed their skills. A hallmark of the teaching is the consistency with which agreed strategies are implemented across the school. This ensures a very secure learning environment for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There is excellent provision for literacy and numeracy that enables very effective teaching and outstanding achievement. The very well-equipped computer suite and its regular use by pupils, as well as the very good use of whiteboards and digital cameras in class, ensure good provision for ICT. The use of assessment in planning is a significant strength, ensuring that activities meet the full range of learners' needs. The school's inclusive approach has ensured that the needs of the high proportion of boys currently in Year 2 have been very well met through topics that fully engage them, enabling them to make excellent progress. Great care has also been taken not to disadvantage the small group of girls, all of whom are very positive about their work. The use of a topic-based approach ensures excellent links between subjects. Pupils themselves talk of the excitement of topics such as 'Pirates' and 'Doctor Who'. There is an outstanding range of enrichment activities to promote learning. For example, special events such as 'Arts Week' and 'Lego Day' are used well to motivate, enthuse and excite pupils. Their success can be seen in the excellent art displays, particularly their Tudor portraits. There is a good range of after-school clubs and activities, all well supported and appreciated by pupils. Very good attention to health and safety is reflected in Healthy School status and the award of the Activemark.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent academic support and guidance as well as strong pastoral care. All staff play an important part in creating a happy and supportive atmosphere where pupils fully enjoy their learning. The systems for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare are exemplary and this ensures that all pupils feel safe and well supported.

Pupils' involvement in assessing how well they are learning is excellent and a consistent feature across the school. Pupils are able to comment in a mature and thoughtful way about how well they have achieved, both within their written work and within the lesson. Support staff provide high quality help and guidance for pupils across the school to ensure that all make the progress of which they are capable. Very good use of outside agencies as well as clear individual education plans and specific support ensures the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The work of the headteacher is extremely effective. He has a clear vision for the school which is shared by all staff and governors. He has built an extraordinarily effective, hardworking team with a strong commitment to raising standards. All staff contribute to the rigorous evaluation of the school's work, leading to sustained improvement.

Monitoring and self-evaluation are particularly strong, impacting positively to give improved performance. Challenging targets are set and achieved through very effective tracking of pupils' performance. Inclusion is a priority of the school, with equal opportunities promoted very well at all levels. There is good provision for community cohesion. However, further development, through exchange visits to a school with a multicultural intake, is planned. Governors show a thorough understanding of the work of the school. They both challenge and support the school in an exceptional way, playing an important part in its development. Relationships with parents are excellent and they particularly value the open mornings, parent learning walks and curriculum evenings.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Verwood C of E First School, Verwood BH31 6JF

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly liked the way you made us feel very welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting the school council and were delighted to learn how much you enjoy school and the exciting topics that inspire you.

We found your school to be providing you with an excellent education.

- Here are some other things we particularly liked about your school.
- Your headteacher, teachers and school staff are all outstanding. They work extremely hard to ensure you achieve the very best you can in all your work.
- You make an excellent start in the Reception classes because there are many interesting activities to help you learn and staff take very good care of you.
- You make outstanding progress throughout your school because you are taught extremely well and get excellent guidance on how to improve your work.
- You thoroughly enjoy school because all staff work very hard to ensure you learn in a fun and exciting way.
- Your excellent attitudes to work and exemplary behaviour show how keen you are to learn and reflect the exceptionally good care you receive from all adults.

Every school has something it could do better, and it is important that everyone, including you, helps with any improvement needed. This is what I have asked your school to do to help you learn even more:

- Improve the presentation of your work, particularly in mathematics, to increase accuracy and be clear to any reader.

With best wishes for the future Yours faithfully,

Janet Sinclair

Lead inspector