

Cutcombe Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123831
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	328000
Inspection date	3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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)	26
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	Mark Warwick
Headteacher	Brian White
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wheddon Cross Minehead TA24 7DZ
Telephone number	01643 841462

Age group	4–9
Inspection date	3 December 2008
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

The evenness of high standards and progress across the school

The extent of good and outstanding teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement

The impact of leadership and management on raising standards, especially through improvements to self-evaluation systems, and how the federation is enhancing provision at Cutcombe.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and staff, a review of the assessment data the school uses to track pupils' progress, and analyses of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors 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

Cutcombe Church of England First School is an exceptionally small, rural school that is situated in the middle of the Exmoor National Park. Pupils come from a very wide area and from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. All are White British and a below average proportion is entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils mainly have moderate learning difficulties or speech and language needs. The five children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are in Reception and taught in a mixed-age class with Years 1 and 2 pupils. The other class is for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

The headteacher took up post just over two years ago. The school has been federated with Timberscombe Church of England First School since April 2007. Whilst each school has its own headteacher, they share a governing body. Both schools were inspected at the same time as part of a coordinated inspection. The pre-school, which shares the same building as the school, is separately managed by a private company.

The school holds Healthy Schools and Football Association (FA) Charter awards, reflecting its commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school is outstanding. Academic standards are high and pupils' achievement is exceptional. There have been rapid improvements because the development of basic skills is given high priority. There are also strong opportunities for pupils to develop their creative, practical and sporting talents. Central to the improvements is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He has had a great impact on raising pupils' achievement in a relatively short space of time. He has built a strong team that is fully committed to improving the all-round education for each pupil. Excellent levels of care and individual attention help pupils to flourish and foster their outstanding personal development and behaviour. Exceedingly good links with the community and other schools, especially the federated school, enhance pupils' learning and enable them to grow in confidence. As one parent says: 'Cutcombe is a lovely school. There is so much more than just the academic side, it is a real community effort. All the children are well mannered and considerate to all.'

Staff have high expectations and prepare pupils extremely well for future learning and their life ahead. Pupils achieve exceptionally well as they move through the school. Those in Reception make excellent progress and, by the time they begin Year 1, reach above average standards, including in literacy and numeracy. This rate of progress continues through the rest of the school and, by Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are exceptionally high. By Year 4, pupils' exceptionally high standards in English and mathematics are testimony to continued high quality teaching. By Year 4, pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding in science are well above average, although their investigative skills are not quite as high; the school is currently improving these in order to bring them up to the same high levels.

Standards have risen for pupils of all abilities in recent years. Improvements have been particularly effective for more capable pupils with the majority reaching higher levels by Years 2 and 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also helped extremely well and, as a result, make excellent progress. Support staff make a valuable contribution in this respect. Throughout the school, pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) very well to enhance their learning.

The headteacher and his team make pupils' achievements their first concern. Very systematic and accurate evaluation of the school's performance has resulted in the school knowing what is working and what needs improving. These systems, with a sharp focus on teaching, learning, assessment and target setting, have ensured that teaching and learning are at least good and, usually, outstanding. The school excels in its assessment systems and the way each individual is nurtured and helped to achieve as well as possible. Staff are empowered to play a full part in raising achievement and this is particularly important in a small school where each one has many responsibilities. Teachers and assistants are given strong professional development opportunities and share their knowledge so subject expertise is kept up to date. Governors are first class; they are fully involved in the life of the school and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness. Systems for shared governance are working well across the federation and governors have been particularly instrumental in helping to promote the sharing of good practice across the schools.

The rich curriculum is complemented by a very good range of extra-curricular activities which spark pupils' interest and enjoyment of school. Such activities have increased since the school became federated and there are now joint opportunities across the two schools. Specialist

teaching across the schools is also used to great effect to enrich Cutcombe pupils' learning in art and design and French. Parents recognise the importance of the federation and remarked how much pupils enjoy joint events such as sport, music and social trips. The school also works closely with a wider network of schools, 'The Exmoor Coast Federation', which also plays a significant part in enriching learning opportunities, for example for gifted and talented pupils. The school acknowledges that the outdoor play area for Reception children is small and has gained funding for its enlargement so that outdoor learning facilities can be more fully developed.

Support from the local church and strong links with the community help to create the school's family atmosphere and pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes community cohesion well, successfully reaching out to parents and the local area. Pupils are well prepared for life in a multicultural society and already respect people with different faiths, but the school is now examining how to widen opportunities for pupils to extend their experience of the many cultures in Britain today. Pupils' contributions to the school and wider community are excellent. They develop a very good sense of responsibility for caring for their school and local environment. Their ecological awareness is stimulated through their activities in the school garden. The thriving school council is a very good vehicle for enabling pupils to contribute to decisions the school has to make. The council members and other pupils work very well together and their teamwork and decision-making skills are constantly emphasised. The school successfully promotes good attendance. The school's exemplary procedures for ensuring pupils' safety ensure pupils feel very safe. They develop a superb understanding of how regular exercise and a healthy diet help their bodies grow strong. Close links with the schools concerned ease the transfer to larger schools at the end of Year 4.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Parents appreciate the welcoming ethos and exceptional care their children receive. The excellent partnerships with parents and the pre-school help children quickly settle. Children arrive with a wide range of skills but, overall, their attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected for their age. They progress rapidly and achieve exceptionally well in a stimulating and caring environment where the quality of teaching is excellent. By the time they enter Year 1 they have reached above average standards, including in literacy and numeracy. Children are very happy and eager to learn because of the interesting and challenging tasks they are given. Assessment is extremely thorough and rigorous checking ensures all children are making the progress of which they are capable. Well-trained and qualified staff ensure that routines are well established and all adults are vigilant about children's welfare and safety. Adult-led activities and tasks to promote the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and number are taught especially well. Very capable children are quickly identified and given more challenging work. Children have good opportunities to learn through play. There are particularly good opportunities for creative development, for example through role play in the 'Doctor's Surgery'. EYFS is extremely well managed and the school is fully aware that the outdoor play area is small and not developed well enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase outdoor play facilities for Reception children in order to improve their opportunities for outdoor learning.

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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	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

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**

Dear Children

Inspection of Cutcombe Church of England First School, Wheddon Cross, Minehead TA24 7DZ

I am writing to tell you how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helping us with the inspection. Your views are important as you are the school's customers. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

- Your school is outstanding and that means it is a really good school. Here are some things that are first class about your school:
- You make excellent progress and, by the time you leave, you reach very high standards in English and mathematics.
- You make excellent progress in the Reception class.
- You have some really good opportunities for ICT, sport, art and design.
- You are a credit to your school and behave extremely well.
- You really enjoy school and get on very well with each other.
- Teaching is often excellent and teachers take superb care of you.
- You have terrific opportunities to take part in different activities with other schools, for example in art, music and sport, especially with Timberscombe.
- Your headteacher leads you all extremely well and your teachers and the school governors are working very hard to make the school even better.

Here is something we are asking the school to change:

- Improve the Reception outdoor area so it gives the youngest children more exciting opportunities to extend their learning. I hope you will continue to enjoy school and try hard in all you do so that your work continues to improve.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Chadwick

Lead inspector