

Puddletown Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113765
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357415
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Shorto
Headteacher	Vivienne Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2008
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed six teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. A small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school were spoken to. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' progress, the governing body minutes, development planning and monitoring, local authority reports, a range of policies and procedures, including those associated with safeguarding, curriculum planning documents and a sample of pupils' work. They scrutinised questionnaires returned by 97 parents and carers, 52 pupils in Years 3 and 4, and 18 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How consistent is the rate of progress across Years 1 to 4?
- Whether pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers, especially in Years 1 and 2.
- How effectively is the school narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment?

Information about the school

Puddletown is a small first school. A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with very few speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. These mainly relate to moderate learning, and speech, language and communication needs. The number of pupils on roll has increased recently, with an above average proportion of pupils joining other than in the Reception Year. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Pupils transfer to middle school at the end of Year 4. The school holds the Rights Respecting School and Eco Schools Green Flag awards. It shares the site with Puddletown Pre-school which is run by a private provider and was not inspected.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Puddletown First is a good school. Having improved well since its last inspection, it continues to do so, with important aspects already being outstanding. A key to the school's success is the inspirational leadership of its headteacher and the outstanding work of the governing body. This has meant that school staff are exceptionally well supported in helping to drive forward improvement, despite the many responsibilities they inevitably have to take on. Subject leadership is good and helps to secure improvement well through accurate self-evaluation and effective development planning so that pupils' achievement is good. Weaknesses in writing seen at the last inspection have been addressed very successfully and there is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls. Attainment in English is above the level expected by the time pupils leave and continues to rise. Having achieved success in writing, staff have turned their attention to mathematics. Numeracy skills have improved well through good teaching, although pupils are not so skilled at using these to solve problems. This limits progress, especially for the more-able pupils, so that, although attainment is above the level expected, it is not as good as in English. Addressing this is a current priority. This, together with evidence of past success, places the school in a good position to improve further.

Underpinned by high-quality safeguarding procedures and outstanding partnerships forged with parents and carers, and a range of other schools and agencies, the excellent programme for pupils' personal, social and health education helps them do especially well in these areas and to feel very safe in school. They are extremely mature and thoughtful young people, with an outstanding moral and social awareness and an impressive understanding of their rights and responsibilities. This, together with pupils' great enjoyment of school and enthusiasm for learning, helps ensure that they behave exceptionally well in lessons and attendance levels are high. These are key factors in pupils' good achievement. The level of care and support, especially for those pupils at risk of underachieving, is exemplary. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as their classmates. Outstanding provision and high-quality leadership ensure Reception children achieve exceptionally well, with their attainment above average by Year 1. Excellent allocation of resources has been a key factor in achieving these outstanding features, so the school provides exceptionally good value for money.

In Years 1 to 4, progress is consistently good due to effective teaching and the good curriculum. Schemes of work to support reading and writing, and opportunities to

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use these in different subjects, are especially good. However, until recently, longer-term planning lacked advice on how to build consistently on pupils' developing numeracy skills, nor did it promote opportunities to apply these, including in topic work. The outstanding relationships between staff and pupils help the latter to get the best out of lessons. Practical and interesting activities motivate pupils to work hard. The use of targets in English which encourage pupils to improve their work and achieve highly are an important factor in their much-improved progress. While targets are set for mathematics, the procedures are not as good. Improving this is a current development priority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and progress in mathematics through:
 - extending the target-setting procedures so that they are as good as those in English
 - improving planning by ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the development of numeracy skills
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in solving problems including in other subjects
 - providing increased opportunities for the more-able pupils to take part in challenging activities that allow them to attain the levels of which they are capable.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

The self-assurance and sense of responsibility shown by pupils is impressive. They are extremely thoughtful and enjoy greatly the chance to become 'Buddies' to Reception children. Pupils demonstrate an excellent capacity to reflect on the important things in life. Their awareness of cultures, such as those in Ghana, where they have links with a school, and Japan, which they study in topic work, is increasingly good. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of different social groups through fund raising for national and global charities, although their awareness of religious and cultural diversity in the United Kingdom is still developing. Pupils' outstanding contribution to school and community life, as school councillors or in improving the environment has been acknowledged in the awards for Rights Respecting School and Eco Schools Green Flag status.

Pupils take the 'Top Rats' or 'Top Mice' home-school agreement they sign on their responsibilities very seriously. They have an excellent awareness of what constitutes unsafe situations and support fully the no tolerance shown for any boisterous play in the small playground. Pupils are totally confident of their safety in school, a strength acknowledged by parents and carers. Outstanding health awareness is fostered

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through pupils’ maintenance of the school gardens, pupils’ excellent awareness of what foods they should eat and their keenness to take part in sports activities.

Reception children’s skills are slightly below the level expected on entry. Their excellent progress is evident in how quickly they develop independence and cooperation skills and important literacy and numeracy skills. These are built on well throughout other year groups and help prepare pupils well for the future, especially so in reading and writing. Reading skills increase pupils’ enjoyment of stories, enhance their vocabulary and ensure that they become skilled at researching different topics, including on the internet. Their writing is increasingly interesting and effective. Year 4 pupils use similes and metaphors well to describe, for example, ‘smoke billowing out like a mysterious fog’, or ‘trees shaking off their last cover of glistening snow.’ Strengths in pupils’ writing are apparent in different genres, such as poetry or playscripts. By Year 4, pupils calculate accurately and have a very secure understanding of fractions, decimals and standard measures. This year, a greater focus on using these skills to solve problems has improved progress, although the full effect on pupils’ attainment is not apparent.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good teaching in the past few years has secured good learning and progress. An increasing proportion of outstanding lessons are being seen, as is evident in the improved progress made in some aspects of pupils’ learning. Lessons are thoughtfully planned and match closely to individual needs. Where the school has

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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identified progress needs to be improved, intervention programmes are swiftly put in place. This is now being extended to target more-able pupils, including in mathematics. Pupils who find learning difficult receive very well-targeted support, the success of which is evident in the decreasing number of older pupils needing extra help. Interesting activities and a brisk pace enhance learning and enjoyment. In the best lessons, teachers are exceptionally good at keeping a check on progress. They intervene swiftly when progress slows, although not all staff are as skilled at doing this.

A major reason for the increasingly good progress in English is the excellent assessment and target-setting arrangements in place. Pupils are exceptionally well involved in this process by constantly checking their progress and what they need to do to improve. The targets set are especially well focused on building on and extending skills, which has helped to improve the programmes for developing reading and writing. Aware of their success, the school is adopting similar systems for mathematics where assessment is not as well developed. The organisation of the curriculum into topic areas, and an exciting range of visits, visitors and joint activities with other schools, considerably enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment.

The high regard given to promoting pupils' well-being is evident in the excellent induction and transfer procedures and outstanding support for their personal development. Pupils are extremely well cared for, for example, through arrangements for travelling on the school buses and the exchange of information with the before- and after-school club. The support and guidance offered to pupils and their families is exemplary. In particular, it ensures that those pupils who face challenging circumstances that make them vulnerable can get the best out of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's exceptionally skilled leadership has led to the creation of a devolved management system that provides a cohesive approach to development through excellent teamwork. Subject leaders monitor progress well, with effective support for improving the quality of teaching, that results in this being uniformly good and, occasionally, outstanding. Good self-evaluation helps staff to pinpoint weaknesses in provision and put in place effective strategies to address them. Their awareness of what is needed to help drive up attainment in mathematics to the

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levels seen in English supports the school’s good capacity for improvement.

The school benefits considerably from the excellent work of the governing body, especially in the contribution to monitoring and development. Outstanding support is provided in key areas, such as premises maintenance and development, significant factors in the strategic direction of the school and safeguarding. Staff and the governing body consult exceptionally well with parents and carers. They respond speedily to any concerns and involve them especially well in their children’s education. Outstanding safeguarding arrangements are seen in the commitment to regularly updating policies and training, and the rigorous health and safety checks and risk assessments carried out. Liaison with other organisations and links with local schools, especially the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership, support pupils’ education and well-being exceptionally well. The school is rigorous in ensuring that no pupil is discriminated against and all are fully included in all the school has to offer. Their equality of opportunity is good, with inconsistencies between subjects beginning to be addressed. The school successfully promotes community cohesion, which is exceptionally good amongst the school and local community, and now being addressed more effectively in relation to diversity in this country.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Outstanding leadership and management, together with excellent teamwork amongst all who work with children, are the key to the outstanding provision and excellent progress children make. Staff are extremely skilled at creating a colourful and stimulating environment by wisely adapting the outdoor accommodation to make up for the lack of space in the cramped classroom. The outdoor area is used not only as

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a teaching space, but to provide a wealth of activities for children to discover things for themselves. This supports important skills across all areas of learning exceptionally well, especially in communication, language and literacy, and in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy. For example, children like drawing big letters in water on the blackboards and gain confidence to form them accurately when writing them on paper. Children quickly learn the letter sounds and use these very well to build new words. Parents and carers commented on the high quality activities in place to help support individual children’s needs, whether it be to improve their fine motor skills or speech and language.

Social development is given high priority so that children work independently exceptionally well. They maintain concentration for a long time and willingly tackle new things without fear of failing. Equally, they like doing things together by, for example, very politely asking friends to join them in the ‘Three Bears House’ role-play area. These strengths, together with children’s great enthusiasm for learning, result in excellent behaviour. Staff are exceptionally skilled at keeping an eye on what each child is doing. They ask careful questions or make observations so, for example, children quickly learn how to correct the order of numbers up to 10 and to identify which object is big, bigger or biggest or when a container is full or empty. Children exhibit great curiosity in the world around them and love growing things. The abundance of strawberries they grew last year provided excellent opportunities for counting how many more they had picked and helping to arrange a tea party to which they invited their parents and carers. Outstanding liaison with the on-site pre-school, which most children attend, ensures excellent continuity to their learning that is enhanced by the outstanding induction arrangements and excellent assessment of their progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A large proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. There was a higher than the average response rate. Most parents and carers have positive views. Those who wrote or spoke to the inspection team typically praised the level of care, the quality of provision for Reception children, the approachability of staff and the leadership and management of the headteacher. This was also the view of a few

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parents and carers whose children had recently joined the school and who spoke highly of the induction procedures.

Of most concern to a few parents and carers, including in the returned questionnaires, was how well the school responds to their individual needs and the progress they make. Inspection evidence indicates that progress is good, especially so in English and in the Reception Year, and during this inspection inspectors found no significant differences related to groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A few parents and carers who wrote to inspectors raised concerns regarding behaviour management. Evidence shows that the school's procedures promote excellent behaviour. This was not only evident in that seen during the inspection, but in comments made by visitors to the school and the different schools and venues the pupils regularly visit.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Puddletown Church of England First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 97 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 144 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	56	38	39	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	55	42	43	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	29	60	62	5	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	34	49	51	6	6	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	56	58	32	33	6	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	41	46	47	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	55	42	43	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	41	46	47	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	34	54	56	7	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	32	53	55	5	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	27	54	56	4	4	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	51	53	42	43	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	57	34	35	3	3	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Puddletown Church of England First School, Puddletown, Dorchester DT2 8RY

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our time talking to you and seeing all the things you do. I particularly want to thank the school council and pupils from Years 3 and 4 who gave up their time to talk to us. We think your school is good and are pleased that you and your parents and carers agree.

Here are some of the things we found out were especially good about the school.

- Adults support and look after you exceptionally well.
- You are very mature, friendly and helpful young people who behave especially well and are excellent at helping your school and local area to improve.
- Those of you in Reception make excellent progress because the way activities are planned and the teaching are outstanding.
- In other year groups, good teaching helps you to make good progress. Attainment is above the level expected by the time you leave, with that for reading and writing improving very well.

This is what we have asked the school to improve.

- help you to do as well in mathematics as you do in reading and writing
- help those of you who learn quickly to do even better.

All of you can help by trying as hard as you do in English.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson
Lead inspector

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