

Cerne Abbas Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113759
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357411
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Cochrane
Headteacher	Helen Williams
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 September 2007
School address	Duck Street Cerne Abbas Dorchester Dorset DT2 7LA
Telephone number	01300 341319
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector, who observed 11 lessons or part lessons taught by four different teachers. The inspector examined the school's policies, assessment information, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. He held discussions with the headteacher, staff, representatives of the governing body and pupils. Informal conversations were held with parents and carers. The inspector analysed 30 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and others by pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The factors that have contributed to the improvements in attainment, particularly in mathematics.
- How well teachers provide suitable challenge so that all pupils can progress as well as they can.
- The impact of the school's curricular initiatives on the outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than average. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school other than the normal starting and leaving points. The school has a number of awards include Healthy Schools, Activemark and International Schools.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Exceptionally effective leadership by the headteacher and strong teamwork among the staff have resulted in considerable improvements since the previous inspection. Cerne Abbas Church of England First is now an outstanding school. Pupils achieve exceptionally well because of high quality teaching and an exciting curriculum. Excellent care, guidance and support lead to very positive personal development for pupils. There is a strong partnership with parents and carers. They are delighted with the care and education provided. Typical of their comments were, 'brilliant school', 'excellent school' and 'I am very happy with the attention and education my child receives.'

Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that children get off to a flying start and make rapid progress in all areas of learning. Highly effective action has been taken to accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in mathematics. Sharper assessment procedures, improvements to teaching and the wider range of activities provided have all contributed to the success. Pupils are making outstanding progress and attainment is above expectations by the end of Year 4.

Lessons are sharply focused on pupils' learning. Teachers' explanations, instructions and questioning promote learning extremely well. Assessment is used effectively to plan teaching and to match tasks to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils are challenged well and make outstanding progress. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve because they are set clear individual learning targets. Teachers' marking provides detailed feedback and guidance. The innovative curriculum provides considerable enjoyment for pupils. Interesting links between subjects add relevance to learning. Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to acquire and apply advanced skills such as critical thinking and independent research. This is a priority identified by the school to improve achievement still further.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration for others and the environment. Pupils are courteous, friendly and respectful. They relate extremely well to adults and to their peers. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is often exemplary. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles extremely well. They feel very safe and well cared for at school because of the first-rate safeguarding procedures. Pupils make exceptionally valuable contributions to the school and to the wider community. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now high.

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The drive and determination by the enthusiastic headteacher has been at the heart of the school's improvements. She is well supported by other subject leaders who are all effectively involved in developing their areas of responsibility. The administration manager makes a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness and smooth running. Extremely good use has been made of local authority advisers and external consultants in the drive for improvement. This school demonstrates an outstanding capacity to sustain improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate, systematic and thorough. The findings are used well to inform planning and action to bring about improvements where needed. For example, since the previous inspection, the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' progress, teaching and the curriculum have all improved from satisfactory to outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend opportunities for pupils to acquire and apply more advanced skills such as critical thinking, research and independent study.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Across the school, pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning experiences. 'Love to Learn', an important part of the school's mission statement, is reflected very well in all lessons. Pupils told the inspector, 'The work is fun' and 'We enjoy learning.' School assessments, pupils' work and the lessons seen show that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more able, make outstanding progress. Boys and girls perform equally well. Considerable improvements to assessment, teaching and to the curriculum mean that pupils attainment and progress have risen considerably since the previous inspection.

Pupils make rapid progress in speaking and listening because of the well-planned opportunities to discuss their learning in pairs and small groups. In Year 1/2 class, pupils talked knowledgeably about the differences between the characters in Goldilocks and the Three Bears in a traditional and an alternative version. They were confident in expressing their ideas and opinions. Pupils show enthusiasm for reading and enjoy the wide range of books available. They write for different audiences and purposes and in a variety of styles. For example, pupils in Year 4 wrote exciting adventure stories effectively. Their writing was detailed and imaginative. Punctuation, including the use of speech marks and spelling, was accurate. Pupils apply their writing skills well in other subjects.

In mathematics, pupils make outstanding progress because of high quality teaching and stimulating activities which are well matched to their abilities. They use and apply numeracy skills confidently in investigations. In a successful Year 3/4 lesson, pupils interpreted accurately the weather data they had collected. They showed a

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good understanding of how to measure and analyse the results for temperature, wind direction, wind speed and rainfall. They presented their findings clearly in charts and graphs.

Pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development. In assembly, they reflected on positive qualities such as perseverance and a love of learning. Collaboration and teamwork are extremely well developed. Pupils choose healthy foods and participate enthusiastically in a range of physical exercise. This is reflected in the school’s national awards. They feel extremely well cared for at school and know that there are always trusted adults they can turn to for help and support. Pupils willingly and eagerly take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council. Older pupils support the younger ones well through a buddy system. They participate enthusiastically in a wide range of local community events such as dance festivals, carol singing and the re-chalking of the Cerne Giant. They support those less fortunate than themselves by raising funds for a range of appeals and charities. Pupils are extremely well prepared for next stage of their education. Their personal and social skills are very well developed as are their skills in literacy, numeracy and information, communication and technology (ICT).

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers share the purpose of lessons clearly with their class, so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Interactive technology is used imaginatively to illustrate key teaching and learning points. Questioning is used skilfully to challenge pupils’

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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thinking and to check their understanding. Pupils are challenged well and their interest is sustained because activities are well tailored to their abilities. In a very successful music lesson in a Year 1/2 class, pupils made great progress in composing sounds for their ‘fire music’ using a wide range of percussion instruments. After being inspired by the teacher and a film clip about the Great Fire of London, they created sounds of horse hooves, the crackling fire and the bell of a town crier. Teaching assistants are extremely well deployed and make valuable contributions to pupils’ learning, especially those who need extra support. Pupils are set specific learning targets for writing and mathematics so they know how well they are doing and what they need to do next. The marking of pupils’ work is detailed, helpful and very effective. Good work is praised and constructive comments guide improvement well.

An exciting and innovative curriculum promotes outstanding academic progress for pupils and contributes extremely well to their personal development. Provision for reading, writing and mathematics is highly effective. Planning effectively identifies meaningful links between subjects. For example, the Great Fire of London topic successfully incorporates art, literacy, history, geography and music. Themed events such as adventure week and science week contribute to pupils’ exceptional progress and enjoyment. The teaching of French adds an interesting dimension to the curriculum. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoy learning the violin and benefit from the expertise of a visiting teacher. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide range of clubs and visits. Visitors further enrich pupils’ learning. The school’s impressive spiritual garden and outdoor facilities support the curriculum and pupils’ development very well.

Outstanding care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school’s ethos. The extremely well-organised, safe and secure environment provided is much appreciated by pupils and parents and carers. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are carefully planned for based on accurate assessments. The programmes and support provided promote exceptional progress. High quality relationships and clear expectations by staff lead to outstanding behaviour. In partnership with other agencies, the school is very successful in supporting pupils and their families needing additional help. The school is very effective in promoting high attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her staff have created a very positive climate for pupils to learn and develop. She has also established good teamwork and a culture of continuous improvement among the staff. The improvements required after the previous inspection have been skilfully steered with staff and the governing body. The school has gained the confidence and respect of parents and carers and the wider community. The mission 'Learn to Love, Love to Learn, Respect the World', successfully underpins the school's work. The monitoring and development of teaching is highly effective and this has led to much more consistency in practice.

Members of the governing body possess a wide range of professional expertise and this is used extremely well to the benefit of the school. For example, governors effectively support learning in literacy, mathematics and ICT. The governors have a very clear understanding of the community and the school's performance. They make a first class contribution to the school's effectiveness and improvements. Considerable emphasis is placed on safeguarding. There are highly effective policies and procedures to protect and safeguard pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of these procedures are robust and thorough. All staff are well trained in safeguarding and safe practices are promoted very well through the curriculum.

Equality of opportunity is promoted successfully and discrimination is tackled very well. All staff strive to ensure that all groups of pupils do as well as they can. Through careful analysis and auditing, the school has a clear understanding of the community it serves. Partnerships with the local community are strong and pupils participate in a range of local events. Global cohesion is promoted through themed events and the International Schools project. There are very strong partnerships with other schools through the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership. This initiative successfully shares the expertise of staff in promoting curriculum development and a range of community events.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1

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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

Highly effective leadership and planning promote outstanding provision and exceptionally good outcomes for children. They settle very well into the setting and make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of strong relationships between adults and children and the considerable attention given to care and welfare. Children are confident, safe and secure in the very positive learning environment.

Teaching is outstanding and children are provided with an exciting range of indoor and outdoor activities. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning and make exceptional gains in all areas of learning. Assessment and record keeping are thorough. Assessment information is used well to plan teaching and the curriculum. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing children’s early language, reading and numeracy skills. There is a very good balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children have good opportunities to explore, be creative and work independently. They use ICT very competently to support their learning. There are plans to further extend the role play areas to enhance the topics and themes. Very good use is made of the local environment to promote language, physical development and children’s knowledge and understanding of the world.

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

Nearly three quarters of parents and carers completed the questionnaire and this is a much higher-than-average return rate for similar schools. All parents and carers who returned them are very happy with their children’s experience at the school. They are particularly pleased with their children’s safety in the school, the leadership and management, the sense of enjoyment and pupils’ progress. These extremely positive views reflect the findings of the inspection. From the results of this survey, parents and carers concerns are exceptionally few.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cerne Abbas 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 42 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	87	4	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	90	3	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	80	6	20	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	87	4	13	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	80	6	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	77	6	20	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	80	6	20	0	0	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)	22	73	5	17	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	83	5	17	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	83	5	17	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	80	6	20	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	90	3	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	90	3	10	0	0	0	0

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	36	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.

16 February 2011

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of Cerne Abbas Church of England VC First School, Dorchester
DT2 7LA**

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school, giving me your views and showing me your work. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I found. Cerne Abbas is an outstanding school and one you can be very proud of. The main strengths are as follows.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is high.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a super start.
- You are making outstanding progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 because of the excellent teaching you receive.
- An exciting range of learning activities is provided including clubs and visits.
- You get on extremely well with each other and behaviour is outstanding.
- You have a very clear understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- You told me you feel extremely safe at school because teachers and other adults take excellent care of you and provide very good guidance and support.
- You make very good contributions to the school and to the wider community.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and she receives good support from other staff.

I have asked the headteacher and teachers to do one thing to improve your learning even further, which is to give you more opportunities to learn and practise advanced skills such as critical thinking, research and independent study.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard. I wish you all best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts
Lead inspector

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