



# St Mary's CE VC Primary School

Inspection report

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 113775  
 Local Authority Dorset  
 Inspection number 279231  
 Inspection dates 27 September 2006  
 Reporting inspector Mike Burghart

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bradford Abbas
School category	Voluntary controlled		Sherborne
Age range of pupils	4-11		Dorset
			DT9 6RH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01935 476515
Number on roll (school)	102	Fax number	01935 476515
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Derek Bailey
		Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Evans
Date of previous school inspection	21-25 May 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4-11	<b>Inspection date (s)</b> 27 September 2006	<b>Inspection no.</b> 279231
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small school in a rural setting. Pupils come from a wide area. As year groups vary in size from 7 to 17, pupils are taught mainly in mixed-age classes. Year 6, however, are taught as one small class of 14. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average but the proportion of those leaving or joining the school other than in Reception is well above average. Attainment on entry, taking into account at whatever age pupils join, is about average. Virtually all pupils are from White British origins.

## 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 because the headteacher's very strong and enthusiastic leadership has resulted in a real commitment by all staff to promoting and maintaining high standards. As a result pupils' achievement is consistently high and personal development is excellent. Children make excellent progress from Reception where high quality provision gets them off to a flying start. This continues throughout the school and pupils leave Year 6 achieving standards well above what is expected of eleven-year-olds.

The school's accurate understanding of its strengths and relative weaknesses ensures that teaching, the curriculum and the care and guidance of all pupils, regardless of their ability, are highly effective. Future developments are very clearly identified and the school has an excellent capacity to carry them out. Current initiatives to bring the school's already very good assessment and tracking procedures together into one manageable system are well in hand, as are the plans to involve pupils more in setting targets for improvement. Subject leadership in English, mathematics and science is highly effective in maintaining standards and provides an excellent model for other curriculum areas where management still needs developing.

Pupils enjoy virtually everything about school life and are eager to work as well as play. This is because staff are very effective in planning work both in class and as part of extra-curricular activities that capture pupils' imagination and challenge them at the right level. The school's work towards the Healthy School's award is responsible for pupils' keenness to keep fit and eat properly. Because they are provided with lots of opportunities to take responsibility, for example as school council representatives, class buddies and team captains, pupils show an excellent commitment to the school as a community. The school's central role in the life of the village and well developed links with the church very successfully encourage pupils to become full members of the local community. Pupils' high standards of literacy and numeracy and their well developed awareness of the applications of information and communication technology prepare them well for the future.

It is not surprising that parents are so overwhelming positive about the school. Comments like 'exceptional', 'caring', 'approachable' and 'a credit to the village' are typical of their views.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Fully implement the 'assessment for learning' approach which is already underway as a basis for setting targets for improvement.
- Ensure that the quality of subject leadership is as good in all subjects as it already is in English, mathematics and science.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 1**

Pupils of all abilities leave the school having made excellent progress regardless of when they joined. An outstanding feature of the school is that pupils achieve their potential and thoroughly enjoy doing so.

The school has maintained high standards over a period of years coping very effectively with year groups which vary in size and ability. It consistently reaches its challenging targets and frequently exceeds them. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 successfully build on the very good grounding gained in Reception and the significantly above average standards reached by the end of Year 2. The school is regularly in the top 5% in the country for the value it adds to pupils' performance. That it was not quite so successful by its own standards in 2006 tests for Year 6 was because of the very high turnover rate in that year group and there being a higher percentage of pupils with learning difficulties. Records show that pupils still made at least very good progress. Well documented predictions for the current Year 6 in 2007 are for high standards and pupils achieving particularly well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

'We love it here. Teachers really make learning fun!' The school council were unanimous. First-hand observation confirms that pupils in all classes feel safe in the school and take care to act safely and sensibly. They are very enthusiastic about learning and relish the opportunity to try things out without fear of unfair criticism. They are prepared to learn from their mistakes. It is no wonder that attendance is well above average.

Pupils respond particularly well to the chance to show initiative whether in learning through play in the Reception 'baker's shop', or in Years 1 and 2 science, deciding how to group living and non-living things. Pupils show a real sense of responsibility in the way they have taken on board the need for healthy lifestyles. They are keen to contribute to school and community life. The excellent school council and the eco friendly gardening club are prime examples. Pupils develop an especially good basis for future study and for life in general.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is very securely rooted in high quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which reflects the school's Christian aims. Parents and staff are right to be so confident in the way their children are growing up towards being well rounded young people.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are excellent and there are examples of outstanding teaching throughout the school. Such provision underpins pupils' high achievement by ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, ability or experience, is well challenged. Staff work very effectively to make learning enjoyable and pupils respond extremely well. Consequently, they make excellent progress.

Teachers are particularly well supported by high quality teaching assistants. Their teamwork is outstanding. This benefits all pupils but especially children in Reception and those throughout the school with learning difficulties. Staff know pupils very well. Excellent relationships, skilled use of information from assessments, perceptive questioning and a strong partnership with parents result in very successful learning. Encouraging pupils to work with each other as learning partners has extremely positive effects on their social as well as academic development.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 1**

The curriculum is very well planned and evaluated with all staff contributing to a rolling programme which not only covers all that is required but ensures pupils do not repeat content unnecessarily. The proof of the success of this is in the outstanding achievement of pupils of all different abilities and the marked contribution the whole curriculum has on pupils' personal development. It is a credit to the school that staff are still seeking to improve what is already a rich curriculum, by better planning and increasing the very good range and number of clubs and activities on offer. Finding time to support the new initiatives already proposed by the school, including making good use of staff expertise to introduce the teaching of French, will broaden the curriculum even further.

### Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 1**

With an excellent balance between taking physical care of pupils and promoting their personal as well as academic development the school has got it just right. All statutory risk assessments concerning staff and procedures for child protection are well entrenched. Consequently, pupils flourish in a safe environment. They benefit from the fine example of staff which shows pupils how to work together. Through discussions staff give pupils very good guidance to indicate how they can improve their work. Although there are good features in the way teachers mark work the school already knows a more systematic approach across all subjects would make it easier for pupils to take advantage of good advice. Despite the success of its excellent tracking and predicting

procedures the school is still looking to make improvements. It is well on the way to making full use of a system known as 'assessment for learning' to involve pupils in setting targets to help them to achieve even more.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding and have a very positive impact on pupils' achievement. The headteacher is very well supported by the staff. Together they make an excellent team. First rate day-to-day management ensures the school runs very smoothly, whilst governors make a good contribution in monitoring how effectively and efficiently finances are used. The school's accurate self-evaluation is based on rigorous monitoring of what it does to improve pupils' performance and personal development. This is central to the school's success. The headteacher has already identified that improving how staff create action plans for the subject they manage will make provision even more effective.

Change is managed very well and this is reflected in the school's track record since the last inspection, for example in improving both the quality of teaching and subject planning. The school demonstrates that it has an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

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## Inspection Judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>1</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>1</b>
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	<b>1</b>
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	<b>NA</b>
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>1</b>
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>1</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>1</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>1</b>
The behaviour of learners	<b>1</b>
The attendance of learners	<b>1</b>
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>1</b>
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>1</b>

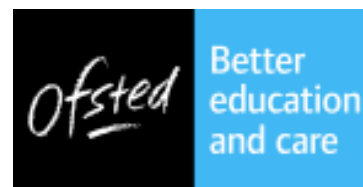
### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## **Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	<b>2</b>
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	<b>1</b>
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	<b>1</b>
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	<b>1</b>
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	<b>2</b>
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	<b>Yes</b>
Does this school require special measures?	<b>No</b>
Does this school require a notice to improve?	<b>No</b>



28 September 2006

Dear Pupils

St Mary's CE VC Primary School, Bradford Abbas, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 6RH

What a treat it was to spend the day in your school. I can see why you like it so much.

Thank you for your warm welcome and your very helpful comments – especially those of you on the school council who met with me at lunch time. What a sensible group! The school can be very proud of the way you represented St Mary's. The council is an excellent example of the high quality teamwork, behaviour and attitudes which I found all around the school.

I am extremely pleased to report that your school is what grown ups call 'outstanding'. This means that the headteacher and all the staff are doing an excellent job at helping each of you to do as well as you can in your work. At the same time they are very good at helping you to grow into responsible people. Together you are making a great success of your education. Well done everybody!

The teachers know that 'outstanding' does not mean 'perfect' and they are extremely good at picking out what needs to be done next to keep making the school even better. I agree with them that the new system to show you how you can make even more progress, which they have just started using, is a good idea. Improving how some subjects are run will also make a difference.

From talking to you and seeing you in class I know that you will continue to play your part. I wish you all the best for the future.

Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully

Mike Burghart  
Lead Inspector