

Portesham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113833
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311393
Inspection date	25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Deborah Zachary

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	99
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Lones
Headteacher	Jo Luxon
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Winters Close Portesham Weymouth DT3 4HP
Telephone number	01305 871283
Fax number	01305 871283

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	25 June 2008
Inspection number	311393

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Portesham is a small school serving the village and surrounding area. About a sixth of the pupils travel to the school from outside the catchment area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is comparatively high. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.

At the time of the inspection, both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher were on maternity leave. The acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher had been in post for two weeks, and the former was new to the school. The report therefore makes no judgement on the quality of the senior leadership in the school, but judgements about systems and the impact of leadership can be made.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Portesham is a good school. Pupils make good progress and achieve well because teaching is good. Standards are above average. Pupils' personal development is also good, and pupils have an acute awareness of how to stay healthy, thanks to particularly good provision in this area.

Progress is very good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and good overall in Key Stage 2. In 2006, the school identified that there was some underachievement in literacy, especially in writing. It took a range of very effective actions, and progress in writing is now rapid throughout the school. This illustrates the school's good capacity to improve further. In Key Stage 2, progress in mathematics, though certainly satisfactory, is now slower than in literacy, particularly for the most able pupils. Although teachers set work for them at the right level, pupils are sometimes not pushed to work fast enough. In addition, marking is not used consistently to help pupils improve. However, teaching also has strengths. The way success criteria for lessons are shared with pupils is particularly effective, presentation of work is lively and questioning is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons.

The good curriculum includes a variety of innovatory activities provided through the year and is enriched by a wide range of lunchtime clubs. It supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils are enabled to contribute very effectively to the school community. They have a really good understanding of the need to recycle and they support each other well – older pupils show a real care and concern for the welfare of the younger children. As one put it: 'We look out for children who are upset'. Pupils also receive good pastoral care from adults in the school, who have their welfare at heart. One parent summed this up as the school having 'a close family/community feel'. The pupils' day-to-day safety is secure, but some statutory requirements for formal checks on safeguarding are not met. In every other way, governance is effective. Governors support the school well and both monitor and challenge.

Adults in the school work together as a team and help each other well. Responsibilities are shared effectively and teachers particularly appreciate the contribution from teaching assistants. The large majority of parents who returned questionnaires are happy with the way they are involved and consulted by the school's leadership. However, a significant minority indicated that they were not. Attendance was inadequate last year, and though it has improved this year because of actions the school has taken, an effective partnership with parents to improve attendance has not been fully established.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school's records show that children in the Foundation Stage have achieved very well this year. Pre-school records show that they entered the school with standards broadly as expected for their age, with one or two above and one or two below this level. At the end of Reception, the standards of the group as a whole are significantly higher than the national average. This is also indicated by their work. Children's writing books show some excellent progress, for example. They have made this progress because of the good quality of the teaching coupled with the small class size, which has enabled them to have a high level of individual attention. Literacy and numeracy receive a close focus during the wide range of activities the children take part in. During the inspection, for example, the children made good progress in understanding measurements needed to follow a recipe, and the teacher was particularly careful

to draw in quiet children and make sure they were involved. The school has plans to provide an outside free-play area for the children in Reception, but at the moment funding is not secured. The lack of such a resource does significantly restrict the curriculum, even though the teacher minimises its impact as much as possible.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2, by raising the pace of work for the most able pupils and improving marking.
- Improve the school's partnership with parents, incorporating strategies to raise attendance.
- Ensure statutory requirements for safeguarding are fully met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

School assessment information shows that the pupils in Year 2 entered Key Stage 1 with standards that were a little above average in literacy and numeracy. Their teacher assessments for the end of the key stage show standards to be above average in reading, and well above average in writing and mathematics. The data indicate that this year they have made one or two terms of progress above and beyond that expected nationally. This year's data for Year 1 show they are making good progress.

A similar analysis for pupils in Key Stage 2 shows that pupils in Year 6 are reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Their Key Stage 1 scores were broadly average overall, but lower in reading and writing than in mathematics. They have made slower progress through the key stage in mathematics. There is a similar picture for progress for Years 3, 4 and 5. The difference between progress in English and mathematics is most marked in Year 5, where it has been excellent in reading and writing and satisfactory in mathematics. There is a consistent pattern for able pupils, significantly more of whom reach the highest levels in reading and writing than in mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. Those who speak English as an additional language are also effectively supported, and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same progress as those from a White British background.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and the need for exercise is supported by the close attention that the school gives to this aspect of development. Health week is an annual event, and 'active playtimes' operate daily in the morning break. The school monitored pupils' fitness levels during its focus on developing this area, and the results show a clear improvement. Even the youngest have a very good awareness. For example, children in Reception said that they washed their hands before cooking 'to stop germs getting into the cake' and that 'germs make you poorly'. Pupils of all ages feel very safe in school and they think that the use of the 'bubble time book' – a way of alerting teachers to their feelings – works well. Pupils throughout the school show strengths in their moral and social development and their behaviour is good. They are courteous and welcoming. Most pupils attend regularly but the level of some individuals' attendance is very low. A significant number of pupils take holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned with work for pupils of different abilities, and ideas are carefully developed during lessons. Pupils are told what they are going to learn in a lesson and they are given success criteria that work very well in ensuring they understand what they are being taught. The work and the way lessons are delivered ensure the pupils' interest. During the inspection, those in Year 3 and 4 greatly enjoyed problem-solving using a computer program with a train that moved off when their chosen number combination was correct. A lively presentation held the attention of pupils in Year 5 and 6, and pupils Years 1 and 2 were helped to use new vocabulary by moving to illustrate the 'swishing' of a dolphin's tail.

All abilities make progress in lessons because there is work at a variety of levels, but in mathematics the most able pupils sometimes have to wait too long before starting on their more challenging work. This slows their pace. The learning objective of the lesson is sometimes less useful to them because it does not make mention of the more challenging things they will be learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular planning provides well for pupils of different abilities. For example, support groups such as 'Read Write Inc' for pupils who need additional help are particularly effective. It is greatly enhanced by a wide range of themed weeks, educational visits and visitors. The curriculum also ensures pupils are well prepared for the future. Opportunities to start to understand career options and future choices and develop financial skills are excellent. Literacy is well planned across the curriculum, but information and communication technology (ICT) is still being developed. Pupils' skills are sound but resources such as interactive whiteboards are not commonly used in class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils report that adults usually sort out any problems they have 'really well', and in practice their safety and security are ensured effectively. Vulnerable pupils are supported well and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good individual plans and targets. The use of challenging short-term targets to guide other pupils is less consistent. For example, it is effective in literacy in Year 2, but very limited in Key Stage 2. This means that even though overall achievement is good, the school is missing an opportunity to improve progress even further. However, improving marking is a greater priority than introducing targets. Pupils' mathematics books have not been marked sufficiently frequently in Key Stage 2 and there are few comments to help pupils to improve. In contrast, guidance to pupils during lessons is good.

The school is working successfully with educational social workers to encourage better attendance, but at the moment there is no system whereby unexplained absence is followed up the same morning by a telephone call to home. An opportunity for a check on a child's safety and an early contact with parents over attendance is thereby missed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school tracks the progress of pupils in different year groups well, and it also ensures statutory targets are set appropriately. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is regular, and judgements are accurate. As a result of these strengths, the most important aspects of the school's self-evaluation are very securely based. This enables the school's leadership to identify areas such as mathematics in which progress is now slower. The good impact of the school's leadership and management is clear from the improvements to overall standards – particularly in terms of pupils' significant progress in writing in the last two years – and the pupils' good personal development.

Though many parents greatly praise the school, they do not all feel their views are given weight. A significant number are dissatisfied with individual matters, and though there is no clear consensus on the concerns, this high number suggests that communications between school and parents are not working consistently well.

The chair of governors brings the benefit of great expertise in education to the school, and governance is good in terms of support and challenge. However, the governing body is responsible for ensuring that the detail of legal requirements for safeguarding is met, and this means that governance is only satisfactory overall.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Portesham C of E Primary School, Weymouth DT3 4HP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school yesterday. We think you are at a good school. We were very impressed with your understanding of how to keep healthy and the way you are committed to recycling. We were also impressed with the way you look after each other, and you behave well. Thank you very much to those of you who spoke to us and told us what you think about your school. You probably saw us when we visited the classrooms, too. We think you are well taught and you are making good progress.

Every school can get better, however good it is, and we have asked the school to work on the following three things.

- You are making really good progress in your writing, but older pupils who find maths quite easy are not always learning so quickly. We want teachers to make sure you start on your hard work early enough in the lesson, and to use marking better to help you improve.
- Your parents and carers do not all feel the school listens to them enough. We want the school to work more closely with them, especially to improve attendance. You can help by making sure you come to school whenever you possibly can.
- The last point is not really about your work, but a few of the checks the government tells schools they must do have not all happened. The school must put that right.

With best wishes for the future

Deborah Zachary Lead Inspector