

Great Torrington Bluecoat Church of England Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Telephone number

Fax number

Unique Reference Number113377Local AuthorityDevonInspection number357330

Inspection dates 12–13 January 2011

Reporting inspector Joyce Cox

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

Type of school Infant

School category Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils 3-7

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 260

Appropriate authority The governing body

ChairKelvyn BondHeadteacherAngela FlemingDate of previous school inspection2 July 2008School addressBorough Road

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed eight teachers and visited 11 lessons. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, assessment information, teachers' planning, pupils' work and safeguarding procedures. They also looked at 139 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and 25 from staff.

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

- The impact of the measures taken to raise pupils' attainment in writing.
- What staff are doing to raise the attainment and achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The extent and impact of subject leaders' involvement in whole-school improvement.
- The impact of the improvement strategies implemented by the new headteacher.

Information about the school

This larger than average size infant school serves the market town of Great Torrington and the surrounding rural area. Since 2005, the school has occupied an eco building on an extended site which it shares with the attached children's centre and the town's junior school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the nursery and three Reception classes. The school has 13 full-time and 39 part-time nursery places. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The main areas of need are speech, language and communication, and behaviour and emotional difficulties. Pupils are mainly White British and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average.

The on-site Nursery Plus provision supports nursery and pre-school children with delayed speech or development and their families at the school and provides outreach to other local providers. There is also an established nurture group which supports vulnerable children and their parents and carers. The nurture group has recently received the Marjorie Boxall award for effective practice. All pupils participate in regular Forest School sessions which are led by a team of trained Forest School leaders. These take place on site and on the common ground surrounding the town.

The school has benefited from extended school services since 1995, offering before- and after-school care during term time and holiday provision. This provision and the children's centre are subject to different inspections. A new headteacher, specialising in Early Years provision, was appointed in September 2009.

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

This is a good school where pupils are exceptionally well cared for and are happy, work hard and achieve well. Outstanding partnerships with other agencies and the school's nurture group and Nursery Plus provision ensure that the school's most vulnerable pupils are supported extremely well. The new headteacher has implemented many successful improvement strategies and the school has come a long way since its previous inspection. One parent, speaking for many, comments, 'Our child is having a great start to her education both academically and emotionally. A good range of child-led topics and an integrated approach means that teaching is vibrant and child-centred.' Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a happy and successful start to their school life. Teaching throughout the school is nearly always good. Lessons normally move at a brisk pace and engage pupils in interesting and practical activities. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Precise analysis of assessment information points teachers towards those pupils who need extra support. The headteacher has taken a strong lead on improvements but increasingly leaders and managers at all levels are relentless in seeking ways to improve further. The governing body makes a significant contribution and maintains an excellent balance between rigorous challenge and much-appreciated support. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has risen steadily since the last inspection, especially in reading and mathematics, clearly showing the good progress pupils make during their time at the school. Pupils' attainment in writing is the slightly weaker element. Boys in particular have lower writing skills compared to boys nationally.

Behaviour is good and pupils say they enjoy school because, 'This is a fair school where everyone is cared for.' Warm relationships, good classroom management and careful planning ensure that work is normally matched to the needs of individuals and groups. However, in a few literacy lessons, more-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve more and boys are not always involved as much as they might be. The quality of marking in pupils' writing books varies and does not always tell pupils how they can improve their writing. The opportunities and activities on offer continue to be improved and enriched through an exciting curriculum with numerous interesting projects and visits such as the excellent on-site Forest School provision. Pupils make a good contribution to school and local community life. Self-evaluation is accurate and clearly demonstrates the high expectations that are being set for future developments and pupils' achievements. Senior leaders have correctly identified the areas for improvement which include enhancing the outdoor learning environment and ensuring continuous assessment for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. Attainment is rising and the considerable successful improvements made to improve pupils' achievement since the headteacher's appointment, together with staff's enthusiasm and determination, mean that the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement in writing further by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are consistently challenged in lessons
 - improving teachers' marking so pupils know how to improve their writing
 - directing questions at boys during literacy lessons so they are fully engaged and involved.
- Improve the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing increased chances to explore and investigate, and establishing an outdoor role-play area
 - devising a way to streamline the tracking of children's progress throughout the Nursery and Reception classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve well. This is because considerable emphasis is now placed on identifying and addressing any potential gaps in skills and understanding, and on maintaining progression as pupils move between year groups. Staff work very hard with the pupils who have specific, and sometimes quite complex, difficulties and barriers to their learning. These pupils, often among the most vulnerable in the school, learn successfully and make equally good progress.

Pupils say they enjoy school because, 'Our teachers are kind and always help us.' They say they like learning, and they are enthusiastic and listen attentively. Many pupils are keen to answer questions but, occasionally in literacy lessons, boys sit back and let girls answer. Pupils collaborate well in pairs and in small groups, often discussing their ideas with a partner. They can explain clearly why some foods are healthier than others and say they thoroughly enjoy sport and being active. They say they would like to go swimming and this would be beneficial since they live near the coast. They also say they would like more opportunities to use computers and inspectors agree. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe because managed exposure to appropriate risk is built into the curriculum. For example, during a Forest School session Year 1 pupils demonstrated an excellent knowledge of safety procedures around the fire circle. Pupils enjoy being classroom monitors and helpers, and like suggesting ideas for improving the school. They are involved with the local community through joining May Fair activities, carol singing for local care homes and delivering food parcels at harvest time. They also enjoy regular visits to the library, church, park and shops, and say they have raised money for charities and brought in their own toys to donate to an orphanage in Romania. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and much improved since the last inspection. However, despite the school's best efforts, a very small number of parents and carers do not make sure their children attend school regularly. Pupils make good progress from well below average starting points in their language and mathematical skills on entry to the Nursery. They achieve well and pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has shown marked improvement over the past two years in response to new initiatives such as a major focus on developing their understanding of sounds and letters. Pupils' good

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

academic progress and personal qualities prepare them well for later learning at their junior schools.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to	2
their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	J
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' planning is detailed and most lessons are conducted at a swift pace. Staff manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and skilfully, and create an encouraging and supportive atmosphere in lessons so that pupils are confident to attempt new learning. Whereas most teachers plan lessons to cater for pupils' different ages and abilities, there are a few occasions when more-able pupils are not always challenged to achieve more in literacy lessons, nor are questions targeted specifically at boys so they are not as involved as they might be. Another area that requires further development is teachers' marking because it does not always tell pupils how they can improve their written work. All pupils love Forest School sessions where they work with enthusiastic and lively staff who make outdoor learning fun and exciting. For example, Year 1 pupils were enthralled when Dino the dinosaur left them a note saying he had lost some baby dinosaurs. They diligently searched under leaves, dug holes and lifted logs to find Dino's babies and then constructed safe, warm nests from leaves, twigs and other materials to protect his babies. Sitting around the campfire to have hot chocolate and snacks completed this outstanding session. During these inspiring outdoor activities, all pupils achieve exceptionally well, not only in understanding and relating to the natural world, but also in their personal and

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social development. A wide range of visits and visitors, and excellent partnerships with a wide range of agencies, considerably enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, Year 2 pupils told inspectors how much they had enjoyed learning about the Civil War. The quality of care and guidance across the school is outstanding. Through strong links with other agencies, pupils, parents and carers receive targeted and helpful support. There are many examples of this having a very positive impact on pupils' welfare and achievement, including those who are encountering particularly anxious times in their lives. The nurture group provides a safe haven for vulnerable pupils and is highly successful at supporting pupils with challenging behaviour, not only in their personal skills, but also in their academic achievement. One parent comments, 'I feel the school should be commended for the support and tolerance they have given both my child and me. They have gone above and beyond their jobs to support us and I am sure this is the case for all pupils at the school.'

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?

Through very good leadership, the headteacher has successfully embedded high ambition. Consequently, all staff and the governing body have been clear-sighted about what have needed to be the main priorities and strategies in guiding the school forward. The Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body are particularly effective at supporting the school. For example, the vice-chair supports the headteacher directly with the monitoring of teaching and learning and has used her mathematical expertise to work alongside staff to accelerate pupils' achievement in mathematics. Staff work together well as an effective and ambitious team, and are all committed to school improvement and to ensuring that all pupils have a good infant education. The school is highly committed to working in partnerships and participates fully and actively in developing significant activities. For example, the Nursery Plus unit based at the school provides high calibre support for nursery and pre-school children attending the school and also for children in other local schools to ensure a smooth transition into school for children who have any difficulty or delay in their learning and development. Close attention is paid to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, enabling all pupils to achieve well, whatever their circumstances or difficulties, and breaking down any barriers that might hinder their learning. The concept of equal opportunities is developed successfully through 'Our Fair School' theme which forms the backbone of the conduct and behaviour policy. Year 2 pupils are very aware of this and told inspectors all about it. The system for tracking pupils' academic progress is effective so that any pupil who is not making enough progress is identified guickly and a large number of supportive measures are put in place. The

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headteacher and staff have worked hard to build effective partnerships and trust with parents and carers. The attached children's centre provides a wide range of parenting classes. There are good policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the welfare of all pupils. Safeguarding policies and risk assessments are of a good quality and constantly reviewed to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils take an active part in risk assessments where appropriate, for example when participating in Forest School experiences. Community cohesion is promoted effectively within school as well as with the local community. This is reflected in the school's warm ethos; visitors are made to feel welcome and pupils show good understanding of each other's differences. Pupils' knowledge of other children's lives in different parts of England is an area for further development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2	
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	2	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money		

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and management, an effective curriculum, good teaching and loving care ensure that most children are in line to attain the expected levels for their age on entry to Year 1. When the headteacher joined the school, she immediately realised that many improvements were required to the provision for Reception children so that it matched the high-quality work taking place in the nursery. Wasting no time, she introduced effective measures to ensure Reception children achieved well in all the areas of learning. Improvement measures included a change of staff and revised practices and procedures. Actions taken were highly effective and provision is now good throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children feel safe, confident and are purposefully engaged in a wide range of interesting activities resulting in good progress and achievement. From their often much lower than expected starting points, most children are in line to achieve the expected levels by the end of their Reception Year. Strong links with parents and carers play an important part in how quickly children settle in and start to achieve. One parent, expressing the thoughts of many others, said, ' I've been very impressed at the proactive

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way in which the staff have informed me both formally and informally about my child's settling in, behaviour and activities. The Nursery is a very happy place with excellent staff, a calm atmosphere and all the children seem very enthusiastic about going in each day.' Nursery and Reception children are encouraged to be independent as they explore and investigate, and their very good personal development is evident as they play and learn happily together. Children quickly become used to the staff's high expectations and class routines. For example, a child who had only been at nursery for two sessions competently put on an apron, painted a picture and then placed it on the drying rack. Children often remind each other of health and safety rules; for example, one child told another that he could not have his snack until he had washed his hands.

There is a good balance between activities led by staff and ones that children select for themselves. Adults are highly skilled at judging when to observe children and when to interact, which has a striking impact on children's learning. They are also excellent play partners, enthusiastically joining in role play and activities to skilfully enhance children's language and development. Adults give good attention to cater for the needs and interests of all children and use enticing strategies to engage them. For example, an imaginary aeroplane ride to India, together with music, pictures, sounds and spices, clearly inspired and fascinated the children. The areas to develop further in this good provision are to make sure that similar assessments and record keeping take place in both the Nursery and the Reception classes and to develop the outdoor area even further to provide increased chances to investigate, explore and play.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2	
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2	

Views of parents and carers

Over half of the families at the school responded to the questionnaire, which is an above average number. All parents and carers feel that teaching is good and that the school makes sure their children are well prepared for future learning. Inspectors endorse parents' and carers' positive views. Twelve parents and carers who completed the questionnaire felt that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked closely at this and found that most pupils behave well and that the small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are managed effectively. A small number of parents and carers raised other concerns which were summarised and raised with the school without identifying any individual.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Torrington Bluecoat Church of England Infant and Nursery 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 139 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 260 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	99	71	37	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	88	63	48	35	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	74	53	52	37	9	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	45	62	45	6	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	59	52	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	58	54	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	57	54	39	2	2	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)	57	41	65	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	59	57	41	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	48	56	40	12	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	45	62	45	5	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	69	50	62	45	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	60	51	38	2	2	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)						
Type of school	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	l 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: 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.

■ 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.



14 January 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Great Torrington Bluecoat Church of England Infant and Nursery School, Great Torrington EX38 7NU

We really enjoyed visiting you and I am writing to thank you for the two happy days we spent there. I particularly liked visiting your exciting Forest School and seeing all your happy faces arriving at school in the mornings. We think you go to a good school. These are the things we found out.

- You make good progress in your learning.
- Your behaviour is good and you work hard and play happily together.
- You are taught well and your lessons are usually fun and interesting.
- Nursery and Reception children have a happy and successful start to school life.
- Your headteacher is a good leader.
- You are very well cared for in school and you are brilliant at keeping yourselves safe.
- You are helped to keep fit and eat healthily.

We have asked the school to do two things to be even better:

- Make sure you all do really well in writing, especially boys.
- Make the outdoor area for children in the Nursery and Reception classes even more exciting, and write down all the great things the children do from Nursery to the end of Reception.

All of you can help by always being kind, attending school regularly and by behaving well. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox

Lead inspector

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