

Dulverton Middle and Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123871
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359535
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Smith
Headteacher	Jeremy Weedon (Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons taught by 10 teachers and held meetings with staff, a member of the governing body and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including that relating to pupils' attainment and progress, school development planning and to keeping pupils safe. They analysed the results of questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and by 48 parents and carers.

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

- The attainment and progress of pupils, especially those in Year 8, focusing on writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and the effectiveness of assessment, especially marking, in enabling pupils to make better progress.
- The quality of self-evaluation and its effectiveness in determining priorities and plans for the school's role in the federation.
- The effectiveness with which clear targets are set that encourage good progress and show pupils and staff what they are aiming for.

Information about the school

The school is of much smaller than average size. It serves a small town, villages and a large and sparsely populated part of the Exmoor National Park. The very large majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning or behavioural difficulties, is average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

In September 2008 the school became part of the Exford and Dulverton Federation of Schools. This comprises the school and the two first schools from which pupils transfer, one of which shares the site. Led and managed by a single governing body from its inception, in September 2010 an executive headteacher was appointed to lead the three schools in the federation. Other leadership and management posts across the federation are currently subject to a process of restructuring and new appointments which will be complete by September 2011.

There is a facility on the site that provides childcare before and after school. As this is not managed by the governing body it was not inspected on this occasion.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils enjoy school as is shown by their above average attendance and good personal development. A notable feature of the school is pupils' outstanding behaviour and excellent attitudes to learning although the school has not always harnessed pupils' positive attitudes to best effect to raise their academic levels. However, classrooms have a calm, purposeful atmosphere and pupils work together very well, for example when designing artwork in the 'Dazzle' genre in Year 8. Pupils' good social skills and understanding of how to stay healthy and safe are developed through the exciting 'Exmoor Curriculum', where pupils in all years spend time working together on adventurous or environmental projects using the vast resources of their local area. Pupils receive good care, guidance and support because these are tailored to meet their personal circumstances. The nurture group and problem club allow pupils to discuss their worries and resolve issues such as minor bullying in a safe, confidential environment, and the support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress in their work. The school has good arrangements to keep pupils safe, is effective in promoting community cohesion and works well with parents and carers who commented that 'there are lots of opportunities for us to be involved'.

While the school has collected data for some time, a new approach to analysis means it is now in a better position to track and analyse pupils' progress in detail. This work has revealed that attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 8 is average and that most pupils make satisfactory progress. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour, but the use of assessment to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils is at an early stage of development. In particular, work does not always challenge more-able pupils to achieve as much as they can. While the curriculum has strengths, there are weaknesses in pupils' opportunities to develop a wide range of skills in design and technology and in the day-to-day organisation and use of time.

Since the appointment of the executive headteacher, who has carried out an accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses, the school has improved in a number of areas. Improved leadership and teaching of English is leading to better progress and higher attainment by pupils in the subject. Leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is having a similarly positive impact. The governing body acknowledges that it has taken time to develop a coherent way forward for the leadership and management of the federation and that monitoring and evaluation of the quality of current provision is not given the emphasis that it should. Nevertheless, in spite of remaining uncertainties and weaknesses in developing the roles of middle leaders, staff, parents and carers now believe there is clear direction and a vision for the future of education in the area, and morale is good. These factors, together with improvements that

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have already taken place, show that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders have the time and training opportunities to develop their skills and to improve the teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - enabling members of the governing body, especially those newly appointed, to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school
 - making better use of the federation partnership to share expertise and resources.
- Improve teaching and hence raise pupils' attainment and improve their progress by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils, especially the more able, can achieve
 - making better use of assessment in planning work that meets each pupil's needs
 - adopting a more consistent approach to marking that shows pupils how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils start school having attained standards that are broadly average. By the time they leave they can write accurately and speak to adults with confidence, for example when explaining how a design could be etched on acrylic material. They use equipment safely and sensibly, as when investigating reactions involving hydrochloric acid in Year 7. They work well independently and in groups, such as when evaluating each other's athletic skills in physical education. Their skills in using and applying number and information and communication technology are average. The 'Exmoor Curriculum' enables pupils to attain external accreditation in areas such as leadership, environmental understanding and in sports such as kayaking, and there is a good record of success in these. Pupils' excellent social skills were seen, for example, when the nurture group of Years 5 and 6 pupils calmly discussed their week with adults and peers over breakfast which was eaten with good table manners. Pupils show care and concern for each other and contribute well to the community, for example in caring for the environment or when the school council seeks their views on charities that might be supported. Pupils know how to stay healthy and take plenty of exercise, although they do not always make healthy decisions when choosing food. Pupils show a good level of tolerance towards those of different faiths and cultures. Their good understanding of their local environment, including care for its animals and unique ecology, and their excellent behaviour all contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and often exceed the targets they have been set. The achievement of other pupils is satisfactory. The attainment of more able pupils is not always as high as it might be due to limitations

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in the resources, for example for design and technology, or in other cases because of teachers' lack of experience in teaching to these higher levels.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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 their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

The atmosphere in all lessons is purposeful and there is no inadequate teaching. The best teaching is outstanding, as when pupils in Year 5 completed their final version of a formal letter to the headteacher which had been developed over several lessons. They evaluated each other's work, the teacher having modelled effective approaches to the writing. In other lessons, assessment is not used as effectively as it might be to plan work that meets the needs of, especially, the more able. For example in mathematics, work for the more able usually involves solving similar problems to the rest of the class using larger numbers, rather than tackling an intrinsically more difficult problem. Marking is variable as the best shows the pupil how to improve the work, but in other cases it is merely a series of ticks. As a result, while pupils have targets for their work, they have difficulty in explaining how these might be achieved or how they might improve their work. Due to the good support of teaching assessments and more effective guidance, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make consistently good progress.

The curriculum has undoubted strengths in enhancing pupils' personal development. These include a wide variety of visits to places such as London and France and links with schools in Poland and Africa. The school lacks specialist resources for some aspects of

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design and technology. On occasions, staff make ad hoc changes to the timetable which restrict the continuity of learning for some pupils in some subjects. Rightly, leaders and managers plan to address these weaknesses.

The school has effective partnerships with external agencies and the college to which most pupils transfer when they leave. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities rightly praise the support they and their children receive. 'My child is making good progress because of support from everyone from the teaching assistant to the head' is a typical comment. Staff including teaching assistants work effectively to support those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as by breaking the work down into small steps. The school is also effective in tackling persistent absence, with regular monitoring and rapid intervention when attendance falls below an acceptable level.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher has brought a much needed sense of direction and purpose to the federation of schools. He has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses derived from effective self-evaluation. While the planned new middle leadership structure is not yet fully in place, progress has already been made in improving, for example, the teaching of English. New middle leaders require time and training in order to be as effective as possible. To date, possible benefits of the close links between schools in the federation, such as by sharing expertise and resources, have not been fully exploited. Plans are in place to remedy this. The governing body, which has a number of inexperienced new members, is not yet fully effective in monitoring the school's work. However, it is effective in carrying out its duties to keep pupils safe, for example by ensuring that those making new appointments have been trained in safer recruitment. Community cohesion is promoted well through links with schools locally, nationally and overseas which help broaden pupils' understanding of others much further from the school. Potential discrimination is not tolerated and the school has effective systems to identify any instances of it occurring. The school ensures pupils have similar opportunities as their peers, but promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory as, while there are strengths, more-able pupils do not fully reach their potential.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers returning the inspection questionnaire was above average. Almost all were happy with their child's experience at school and that it helped them to lead healthy lives, and all rightly felt the school kept their child safe. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that they were not helped to support their child's learning and inspection evidence found that this is sometimes the case, mainly where the child is more able. A few believed poor behaviour was not dealt with effectively but inspection evidence did not support this viewpoint.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dulverton Middle and Community 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 117 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	46	22	46	4	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	44	27	56	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	35	29	60	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	33	30	63	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	35	26	54	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	29	24	50	6	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	38	29	60	1	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)	22	46	25	52	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	38	25	52	3	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	38	23	48	3	6	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	38	23	48	3	6	3	6
The school is led and managed effectively	19	40	23	48	3	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	46	23	48	1	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



20 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dulverton Middle and Community School, Dulverton, TA22 9EE

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing your work. This letter is to tell you what we found.

Yours is a satisfactory school. It has several good features. We were especially impressed by your excellent behaviour and your keenness to learn. You get good care, support and guidance, especially those of you who find learning some things difficult or are experiencing problems in or out of school. You are kept safe and you told us you feel safe and also that, generally, you enjoy school as is shown by your above average attendance. You take plenty of exercise to keep healthy, although you do not always make healthy food choices. You know a lot about people in the wider world, for example from your trips to London and France, are tolerant and contribute well to the community. We liked the 'Exmoor Curriculum' and feel it gives you good opportunities to learn about your local area and to work together.

You get satisfactory teaching. It is improving and some is much better than this, especially in English. As a result, your satisfactory progress is improving and you are likely to attain more highly in the future. We have asked school leaders to make sure your work is always marked in a way that shows you how to improve it and that lessons are planned so you can all achieve as much as you can, including those of you who find school work fairly easily. Politely tell the teacher if you find the work too easy or difficult. The governing body and your new headteacher lead the school in a satisfactory way but like much else about the school this is improving. We have given them some pointers to make these improvements happen more quickly through training and by helping the three schools in the federation to work together.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler

Lead inspector

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