

The Beacon CofE (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113430
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357348
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Richard Light

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 of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Williamson
Headteacher	Susan Lockwood
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. In total, inspectors visited 18 lessons or part lessons and observed the teaching of nine teachers. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff with positions of responsibility. They observed the school's work including two assemblies, a playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including data on pupils' progress, pupils' work, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, minutes of meetings and information on the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Questionnaire responses from 95 parents and carers, 81 pupils and 19 staff were also analysed.

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

- The consistency of teaching throughout the school to secure and maintain pupils' good progress and higher attainment.
- How well leaders and managers at all levels have embedded recent improvements.
- The effectiveness of academic interventions in enabling identified pupils to catch up with their work.
- The impact of work undertaken to bring about improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is of smaller than average size and serves an urban area of Exmouth in east Devon. A minority of pupils attend from the local catchment and an increasing number travel from outside this immediate area. A higher than average number enter or leave the school other than at the normal times. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is increasing, although it remains lower than the national average. The governing body manages a breakfast club on the school site. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly associated with the acquisition of social, emotional, language or literacy skills. The school has gained several awards in recognition of its work including: Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and Travel Plan.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Beacon Primary School provides a good and improving quality of education. Key to this success is the outstanding relationship the school has developed with parents and carers combined with the very effective partnership arrangements that enable pupils to make an outstanding contribution to the community. Together, these foster a very positive Christian ethos where outstanding behaviour in lessons, around the school and in the breakfast club plays a pivotal role in the quality of pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support are strong. Pupils and their families are well known to the headteacher and staff. This enables support to extend beyond the school and has a positive impact within the classroom.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly, making a good start to their education. Pupils go on to make good progress in their learning in lessons and relative to their starting points, as a result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching with sharply focused support. Historical weaknesses in pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 have largely been overcome, although the attainment and rate of progress in boys' writing lag behind other areas. By the time they leave, pupils' attainment is average and rising. While teaching is good overall, in a very small minority of lessons learning outcomes were not made clear throughout the lesson and, as a result, the rate of progress dropped. Frequently, pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to respond to teachers' written comments about their work.

The curriculum contains a range of well-constructed activities which are extremely successful in promoting community cohesion. It is also effective in ensuring pupils understand how to lead extremely safe lifestyles and contributes well to pupils' knowledge of healthy living. This is reflected in the national awards gained by the school, pupils' high attendance and the very high uptake of healthy school meals. The development of pupils' literacy, mathematics, and information and communication technology skills is given high priority in planning and prepares pupils successfully for their future lives.

The headteacher provides very strong and clear leadership for the school. She leads a committed staff team that shares the school's aims and values. Good self-evaluation ensures the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and staff are exemplary and provide a valuable model for other schools. The arrangements for monitoring teaching and school improvement plans are generally good and identify broad areas for improvement, although in some respects there is a lack of precision and detail in follow-up action to improve teaching further and ensure more rapid progress.

Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in the school's work which include new systems for recording pupils' progress, improved teaching and attainment for

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all pupils, quicker rates of progress and more appropriate challenge for higher-attaining pupils. The pace of improvement, combined with the school's effective self-evaluation, demonstrates the school has a good capacity for sustained further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and use of assessment to match the best in the school by:
 - maintaining a clear focus on precisely what pupils need to learn throughout lessons
 - providing opportunities for pupils to act upon marking and comments made.
- Raise pupils' attainment and rates of progress from good to outstanding in Key Stage 1, particularly for boys' writing.
- Sharpen self-evaluation activities by leaders and managers at all levels so that monitoring leads to precise actions that bring about improvements to teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well academically and personally. Pupils make good progress with their academic learning in the classroom due to the excellent relationships and well-established classroom routines. Pupils' interest in learning is stimulated when they have the opportunity to assess their own and their peers' work. During the inspection, this was observed when Years 4 and 5 pupils evaluated their mathematical knowledge exceptionally well to solve calculation problems or challenged each other very effectively to improve the complexity and nature of their story starters. Pupils confidently express their ideas, enjoy reading a wide range of texts and write for a range of different purposes with accuracy and fluency. Mathematical concepts are well understood and connections effectively made to real-life situations. Pupils perform mental and written calculation skills well and apply these skills effectively to solve mathematical problems. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as shown by their high levels of attendance, because they feel valued and very safe.

Pupils make excellent progress in developing their social skills and become very happy, confident individuals by the time they leave school. They conscientiously take on extra responsibilities around the school, for example by participating in the school council, helping younger pupils at lunchtimes or during assemblies. Pupils develop an exceptionally strong sense of community through activities such as fund-raising for Christian Aid, participation in the Exmouth Festival and acting as young interpreters. Through carefully planned lessons, pupils develop high levels of independence and self-control over their own learning. Pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence are boosted further when their achievements are recognised and celebrated in assemblies. Older pupils develop their performance skills extremely well, for example through concerts at local residential homes. Pupils develop a thoughtful and reflective outlook through skills gained at innovative clubs such as construction or family friendship.

High levels of teamwork and collaboration skills are developed through well-planned residential opportunities to the outdoor education facility at Grenville House in Brixham.

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Year 6 pupils use imagery and meaning well to contrast senses when writing poetry based on trips to the local environment.

Previous variations in performance between groups and subjects have now largely been closed so that overall, most groups make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has good plans in place to continue improving boys' writing. A combination of average attainment and good academic progress means that pupils' overall achievement is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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?

Teaching is good and adults understand the needs of pupils well. They have excellent relationships with pupils and encourage them to participate widely in the life of the school. All staff deploy their good subject knowledge well to provide good support and challenge for nearly all groups of pupils. Lessons are well paced and contain practical activities which enable pupils to apply learned skills and maintain their interest. A calm and purposeful atmosphere exists in all classes. Teaching assistants contribute significantly to pupils' learning because they encourage pupils to do as much as possible for themselves. Action taken to address underperformance in some boys' writing has had a positive impact and accelerated progress for older pupils in particular. The school has plans in place to develop opportunities for extended writing in Years 1 and 2 to improve achievement further in this area.

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Teachers have good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and recording their progress. There is some lack of clarity in the use of learning objectives during lessons to precisely focus on what teachers want children to learn. This results in some pupils not making as much progress as they could and teachers not being able to review accurately what pupils have learnt. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to respond to teachers' written comments about their work.

The good curriculum provides a broad range of activities which effectively meet the different needs and interests of all pupils. Visits to a local synagogue and designing patterns based on Islamic artwork develop pupils' cultural understanding well. The curriculum is enhanced by the specific extra-curricular clubs such as construction and family friendship designed to directly address pupils' social and emotional needs. This adds impact to the already broad range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs, including the before-school care. Key moral and social identities and values are modelled well in assembly and contribute to the overwhelming majority of pupils saying they feel very safe in school.

Parents and carers recognise the high levels of care pupils receive. The strong staff teamwork and close partnership with parents, carers and other professionals underpin the school's very caring and supportive environment. Excellent partnership arrangements with a wide range of external agencies ensure that the complex needs of even the most vulnerable pupils are met well. Good transition arrangements prepare pupils well for their next year group or phase of education. Pupils acting as young interpreters for those with English as an additional language ensure that arrangements for these pupils are particularly strong. The school has plans in place to review and improve the quality of individual education plans for those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has embedded a very caring and thoughtful school ethos based on a genuine nurturing philosophy. Her inclusive style of leadership is shared by all members of the school community and staff have responded well to the headteacher's drive for improvement. Ambitious targets have resulted in an environment where pupils can thrive. Their successes are shared collectively and valued through reward certificates they receive in assemblies and in newsletters. Similarly, staff strengths and skills are recognised and made best use of. Strategic decisions to reorganise staff and clarify roles and responsibilities have improved teaching across the whole school. The commitment to

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professional and personal development is an embedded part of the school ethos. Leaders and managers at all levels have fostered an environment where everyone is treated with trust and dignity. Some have assumed or changed their responsibilities quite recently, so they have not yet had time to undertake formal observations of colleagues to bring about further improvements to teaching.

The governing body challenges and supports the school well. Members of the governing body care deeply about the quality of education pupils receive and are involved in monitoring the school's work through monthly visits to lessons and presentations from staff. Systems are in place to ensure statutory requirements are met and finances managed prudently. The school uses its resources well.

Parents and carers receive high-quality information about the personal care and academic progress of their children, and the vast majority are very supportive of the school, sharing in the strong sense of pride and belonging that permeates all aspects of the school's work. Family Learning sessions offer considerable information on a range of helpful areas including internet safety and tax credits. There are excellent partnership arrangements with a wide range of external agencies and local cluster schools. These ensure individual needs can be met. For example the links to the local rugby club enhance learning well in physical education for older pupils.

The school gathers a considerable amount of data to assess and track pupils' academic progress. As a consequence, planned activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and expectations of pupils' performance have been raised. Identified actions by leaders to improve the quality of teaching following the monitoring of lessons by senior leaders is less clear. As a result, some satisfactory teaching was seen on inspection. Through the highly inclusive ethos, the school successfully promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well, for example by closing the achievement gap between key stages. School values are well modelled and taught by staff, and have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and personal development. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well, as is demonstrated by pupils' well-developed understanding of their school through the European Comenius exchange programme and fund-raising activities for Burkina Faso. Local links are also extremely strong.

Safeguarding arrangements including back-up procedures meet requirements exceptionally well. The school demonstrates high-quality practice and is recognised as operating best practice by the local authority. All staff and a high number of governors are well trained in child protection procedures, and adults are fully vetted and checked before they are employed by the school. Staff, pupils and parents and carers state they feel very safe and secure with the school.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff form very positive links with families through the extensive Stay and Play activities and detailed programme of induction. Good and improving transition plans for individual children moving into Year 1 ensure a very smooth passage to the next stage of their education. Parents and carers are provided with detailed information early, helping to ensure that children develop key learning behaviours rapidly. Detailed observations that build on previous experiences and effective modelling of spoken language are used well to provide individual daily lessons in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and number work. Knowledge and understanding of the world is nurtured well when children have time to explore and investigate at length ideas that interest them such as 'faith' through discussing the story of Jesus and The Fishermen. Activities such as creating sand sculptures foster a strong collective community with children working well together and cooperating well with adults. The indoor and outdoor areas are well resourced and adapted to children's responses, meaning that they are always interested in and enjoy their learning. Previous variations of children's performance in different areas of learning have now been largely closed. From skills lower than expected on entry to school, children go on to make good progress in their learning and enter Year 1 with skills similar to those found nationally overall. Early writing and calculation skills remain slightly below other areas. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has good, clear ideas on how to improve the setting, such as developing activities to stimulate boys' interest in learning further, but these have yet to be implemented. Shared planning between staff for Reception-age children who attend before-school care at the school ensures they are well catered for. As a result of the effective teamwork, good leadership and well-organised, imaginative teaching, children become happy and confident, making good progress in lessons.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

A much higher than average number of parental questionnaires were returned. One parent commented, 'My daughter has grown in confidence since attending school and is thriving academically. She clearly feels important and valued and has been encouraged to make strong friendships.' Parents and carers hold extremely positive views of all aspects of the school's work. Parents and carers appreciate the very high standard of support provided for their children. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that the school could take more account of views and suggestions. Inspectors noted that the school has plans in place to address these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Beacon CofE Primary 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 173 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	62	32	34	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	76	22	23	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	52	43	45	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	49	45	47	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	56	40	42	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	49	44	46	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	53	42	44	2	2	1	1
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)	45	47	42	44	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	52	40	42	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	42	51	54	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	42	47	49	4	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	61	34	36	0	0	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	65	30	32	2	2	1	1

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.



9 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Beacon CofE (VA) Primary School, Exmouth EX8 2SR

Thank you for the warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed by your outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons, talking to you about your school and looking at your work.

We believe there are things that your school does very well. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to school life and achieve well.

All the adults in the school take very good care of you to make sure you are very safe. Your attendance is very good. You say you enjoy shaping the way you learn in lessons and the exciting activities or visits teachers plan for you. You look after each other very thoughtfully and gain some excellent personal skills to help you grow up. You know the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise.

Your teachers work hard to make sure you are making good progress. The good teaching you receive helps you develop good skills in English and mathematics. We have asked them to:

- make sure they focus very closely on what they want you to learn all the way through lessons
- improve progress and standards even further in Years 1 and 2, especially for boys' writing
- give you more time to respond to teachers' marking.

We have also asked all the leaders and managers at all levels to look more closely at all that is going on at the school. They should provide teachers and governors with regular and detailed information about how teaching and learning is getting better. In this way, they can all help to make your school an even better place in which to learn.

I am sure that the school, with all your help, will continue to get even better. It was a pleasure to meet you all. Best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light

Lead inspector

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