

Sticklepath Community School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Unique reference number | 113169 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 378659 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Alex Baxter |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 313 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andrew Pearce |
| Headteacher | Samantha Warner |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4–5 February 2009 |
| School address | Woodville Estate Barnstaple Devon EX31 2HH |
| Telephone number | 01271342455 |
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|---------------------------|-------------------------|
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Introduction

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Alex Baxter | Additional inspector |
| Suzie Franklin | Additional inspector |
| Simon Bishop | Additional inspector |

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 26 lessons taught by 13 teachers and listened to pupils read. The inspectors also observed break times, attended an assembly and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The inspectors analysed 92 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by 100 pupils and 13 staff.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2011, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher in September 2011. A children's centre operates adjacent to the school site and shares some of the school's facilities; as it is managed independently, it was not part of this inspection.

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | 4 |
| Achievement of pupils | 4 |
| Quality of teaching | 4 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a notice to improve. The school's overall effectiveness is not satisfactory because significant improvement is required in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics.
- While pupils' progress in most classes is improving, evidence shows that too many pupils have made inadequate progress over time. Progress slows in some classes in Years 3 and 4 and, more widely, in mathematics. Pupils' attainment is improving well in reading and writing but remains low. Attainment is also low in mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils' number skills are particularly weak and reflect inadequate learning over time.
- The quality of teaching varies across the school and, over time, is inadequate. Teachers do not routinely set tasks that precisely match pupils' needs or mark pupils' work in a way that helps them improve. Nonetheless, there is a general trend of improving practice with more examples of better teaching than in the past. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive effective additional support and make good progress in communication and social skills.
- Staff are diligent in supporting pupils in their personal development and keeping them safe. Warm relationships, together with a satisfactory and improving curriculum, underpin the good promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, attendance is above average, behaviour is good and pupils enjoy school.
- Although the new senior leaders are driving improvement, some initiatives have not been in place for long enough to establish consistently effective provision. Parents and carers typically comment that the school is noticeably better. Diligent monitoring of performance and teaching by senior leaders has identified the right areas for improvement: these are being addressed rigorously. Better teaching, and the swifter progress for most groups of pupils,

especially in their reading and writing skills, demonstrates clearly that the school has capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress overall, and especially in Years 3 and 4, and raise their attainment in mathematics to at least average levels, by:
 - building effectively on previous learning to make sure that pupils' number skills, particularly their understanding of place value, are developed in a systematic way
 - ensuring the mathematics curriculum provides a clear framework for the acquisition and development of skills including through other subjects.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by March 2013, by ensuring that:
 - assessment information is used to match tasks and activities to pupils' different abilities and needs so they are fully challenged and learning proceeds at a good pace
 - teachers' marking, especially in mathematics, consistently identifies pupils' next steps in learning so that they know what to do to improve.
- Ensure that leaders monitor carefully the impact of initiatives to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, to sustain the drive to bring about further improvements.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the school with skills that are below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress during their time in the Reception Year, especially in extending their communication and social skills. Observation of learning in lessons shows that pupils' progress is accelerating in reading and writing, except in some lessons in Years 3 and 4. However, the improvement is less marked in mathematics where low levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 show that achievement has not been good enough over time. Lesson observations, school assessments and a scrutiny of pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 show better progress now. Progress is improving more quickly since September 2011 in English, where steps taken to improve teaching this school year have accelerated the progress made by most groups of pupils. In mathematics a legacy of underachievement has left gaps in pupils' basic numeracy skills. Pupils' progress is slow at times and weaknesses remain, especially in Years 3 and 4, because too many pupils still lack a sufficient understanding of place value in number to calculate confidently. This picture of inadequate achievement over time applies to most pupils, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

Pupils' improved skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) are enabling those who find learning difficult steadily to narrow the achievement gap with other pupils. As a result, after several years of low standards, attainment in reading in Year 2 is now broadly average. Reading skills vary considerably through Key Stage 2 and remain low in Years 3 and 4. More rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 means that gaps are closing, although attainment remains below average by the time pupils leave the school.

Further evidence of pupils' improving progress was seen in the quality of pupils' spoken responses and enthusiasm for learning in lessons. For example, during the newly introduced, child-initiated learning activities in Year 1 and 2 classes, pupils excitedly shared ideas about insects they call mini-beasts on view under a digital microscope. During a guided reading lesson in Years 5 and 6, a group of more-able pupils were challenged by the teacher to reflect carefully and offer a perceptive range of vocabulary to discuss and pose questions arising from their study of the novel *Shadow* by Michael Murpurgo. Parents and carers recognise improvements and consider that their children make good progress. However inspectors found that, despite recent improvements, such effective learning is not embedded across the school, especially in mathematics, and achievement overall is inadequate.

Quality of teaching

Instability in staffing and inconsistencies in teaching since the previous inspection, particularly in Years 1 to 4, have contributed to pupils' inadequate progress. Although inadequate over time, teaching has improved, particularly in English, during this school year. However, there is still not enough good or better teaching, especially in mathematics, to accelerate pupils' progress and to close the gaps in their previous learning. Inspection findings generally support the views of parents, carers and pupils that teaching is often good in Reception and in Years 5 and 6, but this is not the case across the school as a whole.

Weaknesses in teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4, include too much whole-class teaching, which lacks pace and challenge and does not fully engage pupils. Inconsistent use of assessment information, especially in mathematics, results in planned activities that do not build on pupils' previous levels of skill. The taught curriculum in mathematics is not sufficiently focused on developing pupils' numeracy skills, including through other subjects. As a result, learning in some mathematics lessons in Years 1 to 4 is constrained by pupils' lack of confidence. Again in mathematics, the marking of pupils' work by teachers and teaching assistants does not consistently identify the next steps for individuals to show pupils what to do to improve their work.

Features of the most successful lessons include effective management of pupils' behaviour, valuing pupils' responses and promoting supportive relationships. For example, when teaching a group of more-able mathematicians in Year 6, the teacher successfully challenged the pupils to explain their hypotheses about angles to the rest of the group. Similarly, when planting trees during a forest school activity, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were encouraged to wonder about how tiny seeds might grow into such tall trees. Teachers' encouragement of children in the Reception Year to share ideas and find things out by working together is also an integral part of their

improving learning, and is increasingly a feature in Years 1 and 2.

Improved aspects of teaching since September 2011 include the sharing of learning objectives with pupils at the beginning of lessons and 'learning wall' displays in classrooms. Strengths in the curriculum include practical tasks, such as the outdoor activities of the Forest School programme, which enrich pupils' enjoyment of learning and school life. The teaching of reading in ability groups has also been strengthened. Similarly, improved teaching of systematic phonics in Years 1 and 2 and its recent implementation in Years 3 and 4 are now beginning to bridge gaps in pupils' ability to read new words and are enriching pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills. Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively in lessons, for example through well-chosen texts such as 'War Games,' that encourage girls and boys to reflect with equal enthusiasm.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspection evidence shows that the positive views of parents, carers and their children about pupils' good behaviour and safety are well founded. Good relationships prevail between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. These help to ensure that pupils feel safe and are reflected in the pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around the school. As one pupil said, expressing the views of many others, 'Behaviour is better now and I like assemblies and events like the culture day that help us to understand how other people live.' This comment also reflects significant improvements in teaching which has raised pupils' interest and engagement in learning. Attendance has improved steadily since the previous inspection; it is now above average and further reflects pupils' growing enjoyment of school.

Continuing strengths in supporting pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable reflect the way that good links with parents and carers underpin the work of the school. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, for example, physical bullying and racial abuse. They adamantly report that there is very little if any bullying and that if it should occur then staff will deal with it effectively. School records of incidents fully support the pupils' view. There has been one fixed-term exclusion during the last school year and records show that this was dealt with appropriately.

Leadership and management

Determined leadership, particularly by the relatively new headteacher and senior leadership team, has established a shared drive for improvement. The more corporate and effective use of data to measure the impact of provision has led to proficient self-evaluation. Sharper and more focused targeting of the right priorities is enabling the school to move forward more quickly. There is a concerted and rigorous emphasis on monitoring and improving teaching, including through professional development. In a relatively short period of time, this has eradicated most of the weakest teaching. Shared expertise has also ensured more good practice, for example, in the way guided reading is used to accelerate pupils' reading and writing skills. However, some other initiatives, for example to increase teachers' expertise in teaching mathematics, have not been in place long enough to improve pupils' basic

numeracy skills.

Alongside school leaders, the governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures meet all statutory requirements. The governing body is now better informed, with clear evaluations of the impact of provision on pupils' achievements. It is therefore better placed successfully to hold staff to account for raising standards. The curriculum is satisfactory in promoting pupils' engagement and interest in learning. Lively assemblies and cross-curricular topics, for example 'The Titanic', promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. However, there is still inconsistency in the way numeracy is planned across the curriculum. The school has an inclusive ethos, and leaders, managers and staff tackle discrimination effectively. Equality of opportunity is securely promoted, as seen in the close support of pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and the rapidly closing gap in achievement between these and other groups of pupils. However, despite improvement, not all pupils have equal access to good teaching, especially in mathematics. Even so, improvements already made to teaching and learning, and more widely in pupils' reading, writing and behaviour, demonstrate the school's capacity to bring about further improvement.

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 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance: | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour: | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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. |
| 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. |
| Safety: | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



21 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sticklepath Community School, Barnstaple, EX31 2HH

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly during our recent inspection of your school. Many thanks to those pupils, including members of the school council, who talked to us so enthusiastically. We were very interested to hear your views. Your school has some strengths but is not performing as well as it should and has been given a 'notice to improve'. This is because teaching over a period of time did not help you to make enough progress, and it still varies in mathematics. Another inspector will visit the school to check how well you are doing and help your school to improve.

These are some of the good things we found out about your school.

- Children in Reception continue to make good progress. Most pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and especially in reading, are now making better progress in learning compared with previous years.
- You behave well and say that you feel safe at school because teachers and other adults take good care of you.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported.
- You enjoy school, especially when working practically, for example, during 'Forest School', and because of this your attendance is above average.

These are the important things that need to be done to improve your school.

- Raise your attainment and improve your progress in mathematics, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school, so that you can build on your previous learning in a step-by-step way.
- Current leaders and managers must check that the actions they take are helping you to achieve well, especially in mathematics.

You can all help by giving of your best in every lesson, especially during mathematics lessons, where many of you need to learn your number bonds and improve your calculation skills.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter
Lead inspector

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