

Axminster Community Primary School

Stoney Lane, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5BU

Inspection dates 13–14 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teachers monitor pupils' progress and develop pupils' self-evaluation skills effectively. Consequently, all groups of pupils know their targets and achieve well from their differing starting points.
- Teaching is good with some excellent practice, especially in the Reception class and upper Key Stage 2. After a period of staff changes, good teaching has been secured in Key Stage 1.
- The school's distinctive approach to developing pupils' personal and social skills, and their understanding and appreciation of health, sport and the expressive arts, strongly promote pupils' good behaviour, attendance and enjoyment of school.
- The stimulating curriculum also enhances pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across different subject areas.
- A strong leadership team, including efficient governance, is effectively committed to improvement.
- Rigorous management of teachers' performance is well established and has brought good improvement in teaching and pupils' progress, especially in writing, since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although continuing to improve, pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is not yet as rapid as it is in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics.
- Lesson introductions do not always engage all pupils with equal success in learning and occasionally there is too little opportunity for pupils to initiate their own learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 20 lessons and made a number of other shorter visits to classrooms. Inspectors were accompanied by senior leaders during 14 of these sessions. In addition, the inspection team observed morning playtime and lunch breaks and two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. Two parents attended a meeting with an inspector and the inspector also spoke informally with 12 other parents and carers.
- Inspectors also held meetings with school staff, including senior and middle managers and took note of 13 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- They also took account of the 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection. The inspection team also consulted the school's own survey of parents' and carers' views completed earlier in the year.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data of pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Sarah Jones

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage and there are few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium support is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is broadly average, but exceeds this in some year groups. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs also matches the national average. The pupils' barriers to learning relate mainly to moderate learning and speech and language needs.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the normal times is above average.
- All pupils are taught in single year group classes, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are taught in a Reception class.
- Privately funded pre-school and nursery facilities operate on the school site and also share some of the school's facilities; as they are managed independently, they were not part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 1, especially that of the more able, by:
 - strengthening the focus on developing pupils' basic numeracy skills
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply skills in real-life, practical, problem-solving activities.
- Enthuse and engage pupils fully in their learning in lessons by:
 - ensuring that pupils do not spend too long sitting and listening during whole-class introductions
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to initiate their own learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Children's skills on entry vary from year to year. Generally, levels of skill on entry are close to those expected, but are below this in communication, language and literacy.
- School and national assessment tests, pupils' work and observations of pupils currently in lessons show that pupils achieve well. This is clearly evident in pupils' increasingly above average attainment by the time they leave the school and, in particular, in their sustained above-average skills in mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- After a good start in the Reception class, especially in language and social development, observations of pupils' learning in lessons in Years 1 and 2 revealed convincing evidence that pupils' progress has quickened over the past year and is now good. This is seen in reading and writing, particularly, and is a positive response to the whole-school focus on writing and the teaching of letter sounds (phonics).
- Although improving, progress in Years 1 and 2 is not as good in mathematics, where some more-able pupils are capable of achieving more.
- Sustained good progress through Key Stage 2, now also in writing, accompanied by accelerated learning in Years 5 and 6 and effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, ensures that pupils are more than meeting nationally expected rates of progress.
- Achievement continues to improve, with the proportion making better than expected progress in mathematics and writing comparing well with the national figures.
- The teachers' effective use of assessment to track pupils' progress and to meet their needs through carefully targeted small group intervention support ensures that all groups of pupils, including those for whom the pupil premium provides support and those arriving from other schools, make good progress. This demonstrates how successfully the school promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- A well-planned curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to advance their literacy and numeracy skills. The pupils' enjoyment and positive attitudes to learning are also developed well, especially for example, during the regular Friday 'Learning Wheel' sessions during which pupils also enhance their skills in sport and the expressive arts and in information and communication technology and modern foreign language workshops.
- Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs receive effective support from teaching assistants. On occasion, during over-long whole-class introductions to lessons, a few pupils of average or greater ability lose interest and their progress slows.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- The good quality of teaching over time reflects a systematic improvement, especially in the teaching of English, since the previous inspection.
- There was also much good teaching observed as well as some outstanding practice over the course of the inspection. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 5, the teacher's insistence on 'exciting writing' and the freedom given to the pupils to think imaginatively significantly enhanced their creative writing. Typical strengths across all classes, which promote the pupils' good progress, included:
 - the way that teachers develop pupils' confidence and supportive relationships, especially in the Reception class, and their good management of the pupils' behaviour
 - the deployment of teaching assistants efficiently, especially to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
 - valuing pupils' ideas and using them effectively through focused questioning to advance learning and explain their thinking
 - effective development of pupils' self-evaluation skills so that they know their targets and how to improve.

- Other strengths reinforced over the past year, especially in Key Stage 1, include:
 - good use of assessment to ensure focused questioning and, in particular, group activity, to match the pupils' abilities
 - modelling clear speech, accurately pronouncing the sounds of letters, and extending pupils' vocabulary to enhance writing skills.
- Teachers develop pupils' learning well through topics, which link subjects together. For example, in a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher's use of music, dance and rhythm during a stimulating topic about the Great Fire of London enhanced the pupils' movements and use of language.
- Teachers use the Monday 'Friendship Circle' discussions effectively to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social skills, and their understanding of health issues such as drugs and alcohol abuse.
- On a few occasions, introductions to lessons continue for too long, and too much sitting and listening leads to some pupils losing interest and, as a result, progress slows.
- At times, opportunities for pupils to take greater ownership of what they should do next to improve are not always taken and constrain their ability to contribute more to their own learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- As at the time of the previous inspection, behaviour is typically good across the school. Frequently, behaviour is outstanding, especially when pupils are enthused by stimulating practical activity such as gardening, painting and using laptop computers, and, for example, in the Reception class during outdoor learning.
- Pupils interviewed agreed that they enjoy school that 'playing with other children who are our friends, and having fun and learning well together in lessons', is what they like best about their school.
- Teachers model and develop excellent relationships in lessons and the pupils' good manners, respect for the needs of others and attitudes to learning are further enhanced by the celebration assembly and through themes such as 'The Olympics'.
- All staff promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, through, for example, historical topics such as the Victorians and the Vikings. The regular 'Friendship Circle' discussions, whereby pupils are innovatively nurtured together in mixed age groups, successfully enhance the pupils' understanding of healthy living, as seen in the school's Healthy Schools Plus award.
- Staff and members of the governing body, and most parents interviewed or who responded through Parent View, indicated that pupils' behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and readily share concerns during circle time discussions. They say that they feel safe at school and know about the different types of bullying, for example racist and physical abuse. Pupils report that, while bullying can sometimes occur, it would always be swiftly dealt with by the teachers.
- There have been no exclusions over the past year, and school records and inspection observations also confirm that pupils' behaviour is invariably good.
- The pupils' year-on-year above-average attendance reflects the diligence of staff in encouraging the good attendance of all groups of pupils. The headteacher's rigour in monitoring attendance and working with the local authority and parents and carers keeps persistent absence at a low figure.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has made year-on-year improvement since the previous inspection under the strong leadership of the experienced, well-respected headteacher.
- The headteacher is well supported by other senior staff and members of the governing body. Their ability and willingness to collaborate in bringing further improvement are clearly demonstrated by the good improvements already made in teaching and in pupils'

achievements, especially in writing.

- Leaders, including governors, monitor, evaluate and develop teaching effectively through focused performance management. The headteacher is skilled in liaising with the governors to ensure that a coherent programme of professional staff development also takes due account of, and meets the needs of, the pupils and the school.
- The improved achievements of all groups of pupils, including those in receipt of the pupil premium, reflect the effectiveness of the way that their progress is monitored.
- Typical features of the school's effective leadership, which also contribute strongly to the good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, include diligence in:
 - providing a broad and well-balanced curriculum, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children enjoy a good balance of adult-led activities and those they can choose for themselves
 - sustaining a welcoming, inclusive ethos, where all adults model good behaviour and relationships and ensure that pupils are treated equally, feel safe and enjoy school.
- The school works well with a range of partners. This includes working with other schools, with local authority specialists and with parents and carers to enrich pupils' learning opportunities across the expressive arts and sport, to monitor pupils' progress and with parents and carers, for example, to secure pupils' above-average attendance.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. This support has been beneficial in helping to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is good and is typified by effective safeguarding of pupils' welfare that meets all statutory requirements, including the comprehensive vetting of staff and of all those who support pupils at the school, and by holding senior staff to account, and ensuring efficient financial management
 - contributes well to guiding the strategic direction of the school, seen for example, by the care taken in deciding to continue to collaborate and not federate with local schools.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113059
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	401338

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Rockett
Headteacher	Tony Harvell
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
Telephone number	01297 33005
Fax number	01297 34557
Email address	admin@axminster-primary.devon.sch.uk

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