

South Molton United Church of England Junior School

North Street, South Molton, Devon, EX36 3GN

Inspection dates 22–23 November 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.

- Pupils' achievement is good, and improving, with the great majority of pupils currently making good progress from their different starting points.
- Due to the highly effective leadership of the headteacher in monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school, teaching is typically good. There are examples of high quality practice, which helps pupils to persevere and be independent learners.
- Pupils are proud of their school and say they get plenty of help. They enjoy their lessons and other activities. They behave very well and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel safe because they are very well cared for. Everyone is treated as an individual, and given equal opportunity to do their best.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong, with pupils showing compassion for others and a strong sense of morality. They play a strong role in promoting their school in the local community.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work well in partnership and have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always give more-able pupils hard enough work, so a few do not attain the levels they are capable of, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants are not always used to best effect to ensure pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is not always as strong as it could be because not all classes are using the school's speaking, listening and drama programme to promote more interesting sentence structure and writing.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected by one inspector, who visited 9 lessons, 8 of which were joint observations with the headteacher or senior teacher.
- The inspector held meetings with school staff, including the headteacher, senior teacher, subject leaders and special needs coordinator, as well as with the Chair of the Governing Body. In addition, she held a telephone conversation about the school's work with the local authority adviser.
- The inspector spoke informally with a number of parents and grandparents on the playground, as well as taking into account the eight responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own parent questionnaire for parents of pupils in Years 3 and 6.
- Eleven responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils from each year group, and the inspector also listened to several pupils reading.
- The inspector observed all aspects of the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including the school's own data relating to pupil progress, self-evaluation, improvement plans and monitoring documentation, minutes of governing body meetings, and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Pupils' books were examined briefly in lessons and in more detail at the end of the school day.
- The inspector attended one collective worship assembly, and observed pupils during play time.

Inspection team

Anne Newall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most junior schools, with a higher than average proportion of boys.
- Most pupils joining the school in Year 3 transfer from the nearby infant school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority) is above average.
- There is a below average proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs supported through school action, whilst the proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Variation in cohort sizes each year means that some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes and others in single year groups. This changes from year to year depending on the number of pupils in each year group.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding to quicken progress, especially in mathematics and writing, by:
 - ensuring teachers plan the work of their teaching assistants more precisely so that they always know how to support the children with whom they work
 - ensuring that teachers make the most of opportunities to use the school's speaking, listening and drama programmes to enrich pupils' vocabulary and sentence structure
 - consistently providing work that is hard enough for more-able pupils in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 has historically been well below average, but has improved considerably in recent years and is now similar to the national average.
- The learning and progress of pupils currently in the school is good in all year groups. They are making more rapid progress due to improvements in teaching.
- Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are making up for lost time, due to weaker teaching in the past, and are now making rapid and sustained progress. The school's detailed assessment data show that most pupils are on track to reach, or exceed, the national expectations for their age by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils throughout the school are making good progress in reading, following the introduction of initiatives to encourage them to read more frequently and regular guided reading sessions with their teachers. Their progress in writing, whilst good and improving, is not yet as rapid.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is also good and improving, but there are not yet sufficient pupils attaining the higher levels of which they are capable because their lessons do not always make them think hard enough or apply their skills.
- Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs make good progress from their starting points, due to careful monitoring of their work and appropriate support.
- The achievement of pupils in receipt of support from the pupil premium is very similar to that of their peers in school, and better in some cases.
- Senior leaders and class teachers monitor the progress of each pupil very carefully, and additional support is provided for pupils, when necessary, so that they do not fall behind.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. It is characterised by good use of resources to support learning, activities matched well to pupils' needs or interests in most lessons, high expectations of staff, and motivated pupils.
- Work in pupils' books, as well as information about their progress, shows that teaching over time is also good.
- Pupils know their targets, and teachers frequently refer to them during lessons to remind pupils what they need to be aiming for.
- Teachers monitor their pupils' progress closely during the best lessons, intervening at well-judged moments to clarify teaching points or to remind pupils of what is expected.
- Marking of pupils' work is excellent in most cases, giving pupils praise as well as clear instructions for how to improve their work further. Pupils frequently use self-assessment, guided by their teachers, which helps them to understand the next steps in learning.
- Outstanding use is made of technology in some lessons, for example pupils in Year 6 demonstrating a high level of skill when working collaboratively to create powerpoint presentations about the causes of bushfires in Australia, using high level skills such as hyperlinking, inserting images, text boxes and word art, and using animation techniques to enhance their presentations. Their previous learning in literacy ensured they had the language and grammar skills necessary to write in the right style, whilst their science and geography lessons ensured they understood the causes and consequences of bushfire.
- In the best lessons, teachers move higher attaining pupils on quickly with challenging tasks, leaving them free to give closer attention to the rest of the class. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson on writing a balanced argument, one group of pupils, supervised well by a teaching assistant and using supported appropriate resources prepared by the teacher, produced outstanding work.
- Homework is used well to encourage pupils to continue learning at home; for example, in a Year

3/4 class pupils are given a grid containing a range of tasks in a variety of subjects to do over a two-week period. They can choose how and when to carry out their homework tasks, which develops their independence.

- In most classes, teaching assistants provide good support for individuals and groups of pupils, but occasionally this is not the case when they are either not given sufficient guidance or do not intervene at the right times to support pupils requiring help with behaviour or learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons, whether taught by their class teacher or by the school's usual supply teachers. Their behaviour is also good when moving around the school and during playtimes, and during collective worship it is outstanding.
- They display positive attitudes to learning in the great majority of lessons and are keen to learn. On a few occasions, when the teaching is not stimulating and they are not involved enough, some lose interest and become restless.
- In discussion, pupils say they feel safe in school and very well cared for. They are able to discuss types of bullying such as name calling or persistent teasing, but say that it does not happen in school, and if it did 'the teachers would sort it out'. The pupils are taught about e-safety as well as other aspects of keeping themselves safe, for example through the life skills programme.
- The school's records relating to behaviour, including bullying or racist incidents, show that there is a very low incidence of poor behaviour. This matches the pupils' views on behaviour, indicated through a survey of pupils held by the school.
- When talking to the inspector, pupils said that the behaviour in school is good, but occasionally there is misbehaviour, 'usually from pupils who have come from somewhere else'. They say that they 'help them to improve by showing them how to behave'.
- Seven out of the eight parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as those spoken to informally on the playground, say that behaviour is good. Parents on the playground say it has improved in recent years, and the reputation of the school in the community has improved considerably.
- Attendance at school is above average for the vast majority of pupils, and the school has taken effective action to ensure better attendance of a small minority of pupils who were persistently absent.

The leadership and management are good

- The highly effective headteacher has shown enthusiasm and inspiration in leading improvements in the school to give pupils a high quality education. She has created a strong staff team, including some new teachers and a new senior teacher, which now works more closely with the governing body.
- The local authority has provided the school with good support, helping it to implement strategies to improve achievement and the quality of teaching. This has been successful in bringing about the required improvements, to the extent that the support provided now is light touch, as monitoring shows that the school is now in a strong position to continue to improve.
- Innovative use of new technology means senior staff have recorded evidence of lessons showing, for example, the quality of teaching, the children at work and discussions with children about a range of subjects. The recordings are used within school by teachers to improve their practice.
- Senior staff have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gained from their close monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school. Their action plans are well focused on improving learning. Nevertheless, some issues remain in relation to the consistency of teaching in writing and mathematics.

- The headteacher and governors have taken firm action when necessary to improve the quality of teaching, making good use of performance management to improve the quality of teaching and to base decisions about the pay of teachers. Teachers are fully committed to their personal and professional development, and some have taken on additional responsibilities such as subject leadership or responsibility for the school's website and blogging facility.
 - Subject leaders have become involved well in monitoring their subjects and, consequently, have a good understanding of what works well, and what could be better. They have been effective in introducing new strategies which have already led to improvements in learning in reading and mathematics.
 - The curriculum is well organised around a single theme each term, and is well planned making good use of cross-curricular links to enhance learning.
 - The relatively new pupil assessment tracking system is analysed thoroughly by the senior teacher and headteacher, and shared with teachers, which means they have an in depth knowledge of the progress of each child. Governors receive reports on the progress of classes in all subjects.
 - School leaders and staff are committed to the safety and safeguarding of all pupils. Policies and procedures are robust and carefully monitored by the headteacher and governors.
 - Staff who responded to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive. One wrote, 'The children's progress is always at the forefront of our minds.'
 - The steady improvements, over recent years in achievement, the quality of teaching, strengthening leadership, the environment, the involvement of governors and the reputation of the school, show that the school has the capacity to improve further.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is becoming closely involved in monitoring the work of the school and is providing challenge to leaders about the school's performance because of the high quality information it receives from the headteacher, senior teacher and subject leaders. The governing body has been involved in strategic decision making, for example in agreeing changes to the deployment of staff, and in the spending of the pupil premium which has been used effectively and appropriately, for example to provide additional small group support for those pupils who need it. Governors ensure that the performance management system is effective and that there are close links between the pay of teachers and leaders and pupils' progress. The governing body has been instrumental in involving parents more in school life, through their parent forum and through the work of parent governors.
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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	113454
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	401371

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Webber
Headteacher	Patricia Martin
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 January 2010
Telephone number	01769 572656
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