

Musbury Primary School

Church Hill, Musbury, Axminster, EX13 8BB

Inspection dates 7–8 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should, particularly in writing.
- Teaching over time has not been consistently good. Teachers' expectations have not been high enough, as reflected sometimes in limited challenge and a slow pace of learning when pupils work on tasks away from the teacher.
- The purposes of lessons are not spelled out specifically enough and pupils' targets are not used enough in lessons to enable pupils to learn as well as they should.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills in topic work outside of English lessons are too limited.
- Support staff are not always used well in assisting pupils in their learning.
- The school has been very dependent on outside support for its leadership and teaching in recent months. As a result, planned strategies to improve school performance are at a very early stage of being put into practice.

The school has the following strengths:

- The current, temporary leadership has a very good understanding of how the school needs to improve. Achievement is beginning to rise due to efforts being made to improve teaching.
- Pupils behave well and have a positive attitude towards school. They feel very safe and get on well together.
- The leadership, supported by the governing body, checks the quality of teaching and evaluates the school's performance accurately.
- Parents and carers are very appreciative of the high level of care and support for their children, especially those coming from potentially challenging circumstances.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four lessons, all taught within the one class.
- Meetings were held with the acting executive headteacher, a group of pupils, staff, governors and several parents and carers.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan, records of monitoring and safeguarding, minutes of the governing body, the school's evaluation of itself, data on pupils' current progress and samples of pupils' work.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to register any results. The inspector considered three responses made in staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is very small in comparison to the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are now both above average, although most of these pupils joined the school either last term or a few days before the inspection.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional funding provided by the government for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups. Almost all those pupils eligible for this funding joined the school either last term or a few days before the inspection.
- All pupils in the school, including the very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are taught for most of the time in one class.
- There have been significant changes to the school since the previous inspection. The school roll began to fall dramatically over one year ago. It has just begun to rise again. The school has not had its own headteacher since the previous incumbent left the school over six months ago. The school is currently led by an acting executive headteacher who runs the nearby large Sidmouth Church of England Primary School. A teacher from that school is currently the only full-time teacher in Musbury Primary, although there is also one part-time teacher for part of the week, and a teaching assistant.
- During the inspection, a decision was formally taken by the governing bodies to federate Musbury School with Sidmouth Church of England Primary School under the leadership of the current acting executive headteacher, with effect from next month.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and raises achievement by:
 - ensuring that when pupils work away from the teacher’s direct supervision, the tasks are always pitched at an appropriate level of challenge to enable all pupils to learn to their full potential
 - ensuring that support staff are used consistently well throughout lessons to assist pupils to learn effectively
 - using pupils’ targets in lessons to make learning objectives more precise and geared to the needs of individual pupils.
- Improve attainment and progress in writing by:
 - building on the current leadership’s strategy of providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length in topics outside of English lessons.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - building on the recent efforts to improve the school’s overall performance by ensuring that the planned strategies to develop teaching and learning are implemented securely and as soon as possible in the forthcoming new school structure.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Until very recently children joined this school with attainment broadly in line with expectations. However, the majority of the very few pupils now in the school have either joined it in the last few days, or joined during the previous term. In most instances the prior attainment of these pupils was below age-related expectations.
- In previous years, levels of attainment were above average at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, as reflected in assessment results. However, the progress of the pupils had been variable from their starting points, with several of them not making as much progress as they should. Therefore achievement over time requires improvement. Last year very few pupils were assessed in the phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) check. Comparisons with national averages are not reliable.
- The progress of the few pupils currently in the school also requires improvement, because it is too variable, especially for younger pupils. Although the very few children in Reception, and pupils in Key Stage 2, sometimes make good progress in lessons, this happens too rarely for younger pupils in Key Stage 1. This is evident in some lessons and also from the work in their books.
- Where progress requires improvement in lessons, it occurs mostly when pupils in the various year groups are given tasks which, although engaging the pupils, provide them with too little challenge. For example, some pupils, especially the younger ones, were observed spending too long on rather low-level tasks in mathematics before moving on to higher level work. There are sometimes missed opportunities to advance learning, for example, when the reception children were playing by themselves but staff did little to question them and stimulate their learning more.
- One of the reasons why progress in writing has been slower than in other core subjects is that there are too few opportunities to write at length outside of English lessons. The quality of handwriting and presentation is too variable. The school recognises writing as a major area for development and has plans to promote more extensive writing opportunities.
- The small number of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are almost all very new to the school, and are making progress at a similar rate to that of other pupils in English and mathematics. However, there is very little evidence of their prior achievement in order to assess their achievement over time. This also applies to other groups such as the more able and those supported through pupil premium funding.
- There is evidence of improving progress for a few pupils, and this is evident in some of the work done in lessons. It is also evident from the school's data on recent pupils' performance. However, this improvement is not yet consistent or sustained enough over a longer period, since there has been a tendency to devise a series of tasks for pupils to do, without focusing sufficiently on the quality of learning expected.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has been too variable in quality for the last two years, and the inconsistency has been exacerbated by significant changes in staffing and uncertainties about the school's future. These issues are only just being resolved. Therefore teaching still requires further improvement, although some improvement is now happening as the teaching expertise brought in from outside the school has helped to address some of the weaknesses.
- Most of the teaching takes place within the one class. Pupils say that they enjoy the lessons, and mostly stay on task well, but sometimes the activities are too slow-paced and basic. More-able pupils do not always move on to tasks which would improve their learning more quickly. Similarly, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs get good support for parts of

lessons but do not always learn as well as they might.

- Sometimes the additional staff support in the classroom is not deployed effectively enough to support the needs of pupils across different year groups.
- Pupils' work is marked conscientiously, because the marking is detailed and provides constructive comments. However, there is very limited use of pupils' targets in lessons, lesson objectives are not specific enough, and pupils have a limited opportunity to get a precise understanding of how they can move their work to the next level.
- There is some good teaching, resulting in good progress by pupils. This usually happens when the teacher is able to move the learning on through skilful questioning and prompting. There are very good relationships in lessons between pupils and the teacher, and pupils also collaborate well together.
- The current leadership recognises the inconsistencies which have been typical of the teaching for some time, and is addressing them. However, several of the initiatives are very new or still at the planning stage. The situation is complicated by the rapid changes in the make-up of the pupil population and the necessity of accommodating pupils from every year group from Reception to Year 6 within the same setting for much of their time in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good; the great majority of pupils have a very positive attitude towards learning in the classroom. Pupils make a positive contribution to their own learning even when the teaching is not as well targeted as it might be. Behaviour is not outstanding, because the behaviour of a very small number of younger pupils has to be managed carefully to keep them on task.
- Behaviour is also very good around the school. Pupils of all ages get on well with each other. They told the inspector that behaviour is nearly always good, and although they understand the different forms that bullying can take, they are insistent that it is not an issue in the school.
- The school records also indicate very positive attitudes and behaviour. There have been no exclusions, racist incidents or major concerns for a long time.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure in the school is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe. Several parents and carers talked to the inspector and in some instances the quality of care and safety was a significant reason for them choosing this school, despite some of the uncertainty about the school's future. The quality of care and support for pupils was judged as outstanding at the previous inspection, and remains a strength of the school, contributing to pupils' enjoyment.
- Although attendance has been below average, this is largely due to the prolonged illnesses of a very small number of pupils, which have had a disproportionate effect on the attendance statistics in such a small school.
- Pupils have opportunities to show responsibility, by helping each other and serving on the school council. They also take part in fund-raising activities. They enjoy visits outside the school, sometimes in conjunction with pupils from other local schools.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The acting executive headteacher, and the main class teacher, are currently in the school on a temporary basis. However, they are now set to take the school into the next phase of its development following the formal decision taken during the inspection to federate the school under the leadership of the current acting executive headteacher. The improvements already made demonstrate that the school can improve further.
- Leadership and management require improvement, because major changes in staffing, including

the leadership, during the last two years have created considerable uncertainty, contributed significantly to the declining school roll and delayed attempts to address weaknesses in the school's performance.

- The current leadership has a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is committed to pursuing excellence, and the school's planning for improvement focuses on the appropriate priorities. There are several strategies in place or at the planning stage to raise achievement and the school's performance generally, but because the leadership has been in place for only one term, and during that time the school roll has changed significantly, the strategies are not yet embedded. The leadership is bringing about improvements, but not yet rapidly enough.
 - Some of the improvements include better checking of the quality of teaching and learning, more systematic assessment of pupils' progress and needs, and provision of better support for pupils. For example, more-able pupils benefit from specialist expertise in science and music provided from outside the school.
 - Parents and carers are very appreciative of what the leadership is doing for the school and are very confident about the school's future. Parents and carers are very complimentary about the quality of communications from the school and the links with the local community, which has continued to support the school through difficult times.
 - The leadership has ensured appropriate use of additional funding. Finance acquired through the pupil premium has been used to provide extra staff support and resources for those pupils eligible, and is beginning to have a positive impact. Primary sports funding has been used to purchase sports expertise from outside the school, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and standards.
 - The leadership makes effective use of the school's links with its partner school in the forthcoming federation, and links with other schools in the local learning alliance. For example, opportunities have been taken for joint staff training. Pupils get opportunities to attend and enjoy sports events and residential trips.
 - The leadership is currently making changes to the curriculum. These include the creation of topics appealing to pupils' interests, and ensuring more opportunities for high-quality learning, especially in writing.
 - The local authority has played a direct role in stabilising the school, mainly by strengthening the leadership and facilitating opportunities for the staff to benefit from opportunities for professional development.
 - There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure that staff are held accountable for progress and that pay is linked to performance, although these procedures are limited in their application at present since key staff are currently funded from outside the school.
 - There are good opportunities to promote spiritual development, seen in the enthusiastic response to daily assemblies and the reflecting on important themes introduced there. The school also encourages good social development by providing many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is in the process of undergoing considerable restructuring as the school itself changes its status. Several governors are active in the school, for example helping with school clubs. Their knowledge of how well pupils in the school have performed in relation to pupils elsewhere has been variable, but they do now ask appropriate questions of the leadership about the school's performance. Governors acknowledge that they have not always been challenging enough in the past, but are more so now. For example, they understand how initiatives like pupil premium funding impact on performance. They ensure that the school promotes equal opportunities and provides a secure environment for pupils from all backgrounds. Governors also ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures in the school meet requirements. They now have a better understanding of the qualities of teaching in the school. The governing body has worked hard to resolve budgetary issues created by the
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significant changes in the structure of the school and its changing roll.

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	113102
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	426803

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	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rupert Butler
Acting Executive Headteacher	Paul Walker
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2008
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