



Sticklepath Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113169
LEA Devon
Inspection number 279109
Inspection dates 24 November 2005 to 25 November 2005
Reporting inspector John Carnaghan RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Woodville Estate
School category	Community		Barnstaple
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Devon EX31 2HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01271 342455
Number on roll	334	Fax number	01271 324 649
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Des Brailey
Date of previous inspection	3 November 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Toni Carter

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. It serves a disadvantaged part of Barnstaple. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average and the proportion of those with learning difficulties is well above average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and all pupils speak English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education and gives satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

There have been many changes in recent years and these have started a train of improvements. With many new staff, much improved accommodation, better behaviour, improved teaching and higher attendance, the school is now a vibrant and positive environment for learning. Pupils love coming to school, are well cared for and parents are happy with the opportunities it gives to their children. Above all, the standards pupils are achieving are now starting to rise. The previous low achievement by pupils in Years 3 to 6 is being addressed and standards in Year 6 are now similar to the national average. This is mainly because teaching is now satisfactory, although a few lessons are insufficiently challenging. The Foundation Stage is good and children get a flying start to their education, although standards are still below average by the time they start in Year 1.

Sound leadership, particularly from the headteacher, has tackled all of the weaknesses noted in the last inspection. The school has good knowledge of pupils' standards, it plans well for the future and its capacity for improvement is good. The curriculum is satisfactory, but the school has correctly identified teaching of the arts as an area needing development. Monitoring of information gained on pupils' achievements is good but monitoring of teaching does not promote the best teaching practices well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the strong focus on pupils' progress to maintain improvements in standards.
- Continue to promote creative elements of the curriculum.
- Ensure monitoring of teaching develops the best possible ways of promoting learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the school with skills below the national average; in particular their language and literacy skills are well below average. Children in their first term in school make good progress. Some are likely to reach expected standards by the end of the school year and achievement in the Foundation Stage is good.

Good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 by effective teaching, so that by the end of Year 2 standards of work in reading, writing and mathematics are similar to the national average. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. It is less effective than in the lower years because these pupils have experienced inadequate teaching in the past. There is, though, clear evidence that achievement is improving and the school's anticipation of better standards is well founded. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are average. The key to these improving standards lies in the

improved teaching in the school. The school sets itself challenging targets, which it has found difficult to meet.

The school is careful to ensure that no pupils are left behind in their learning. Those who need support are identified young and receive good quality assistance for as long as it is needed. As a result, there is no significant underachievement amongst any groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils of all ages enjoy school and each other's company. Older children have many opportunities to take on more responsibilities which they undertake happily, for example in helping to welcome and settle the new reception children during their 'taster' afternoon before starting at school. Relationships are very positive, especially during playtimes when pupils of all ages join in activities together. Behaviour is good and much improved and pupils and parents recognise this. Reception class children are making good progress in their personal development.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and that adults are friendly and helpful. The school council is busy and views and suggestions have led to positive changes. It manages a small budget and members know that how they spend it will have consequences for all pupils. Pupils love the well cooked fresh food and understand that this is good for them. Younger children know, too, that it is important to keep fit and to eat properly. Pupils get involved in community events and activities, including a residential visit in Year 6. Pupils gain satisfactory and increasing levels of competence in the numeracy, literacy and computer skills needed for their future economic well-being. Pupils' well-being is very well fostered at the school. Attendance is improving and is now satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and has improved considerably since the previous inspection.

Good teaching in the reception class sees children settled, happy and achieving. Teaching is also good in Years 1 and 2 where there is a strong focus on ensuring that achievement is good. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and has improved; however, it can be inconsistent. Pupils enjoy lessons and their positive attitudes make a very good contribution to their learning.

There are strengths in teaching. Lessons are very thoroughly planned so that work is well organised to meet all pupils' learning needs. Because they are so well prepared, lessons go smoothly, with few delays and resources always to hand when required. Many teachers use interactive whiteboards very well, enlivening explanations with

video clips and involving pupils with 'hands on' learning experiences. Pupils' work is very well marked. Advice is friendly and clear and pupils are expected to react to teachers' comments by writing 'replies' in their books. Teaching assistants take part in all elements of lessons and, by giving individualised help, make a significant contribution to pupils' progress, including pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Where teaching is less effective the pace of lessons is too slow and as a result pupils are not always on task and learning at a suitable rate. This lack of challenge can be reflected in teaching, which, occasionally, does too little to encourage high achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with many strengths. Raising basic standards has been a priority and as a result much effective work has been done to develop the curriculum in literacy, numeracy and science. Topics in these subjects are organised, adapted and matched to pupils' needs so that they build on their successes. This includes those with learning difficulties. Good use is made of the new facilities in the reception class to offer young children a wide range of activities. Older pupils enjoy a good choice of clubs and extra activities. There are clear arrangements for pupils to learn about safety, health and living in a community. The school recognises the need to spend time on enhancing the way other subjects, particularly the arts, are planned and organised to make them more relevant and interesting.

A good start has been made with more visits and visitors organised as an effective way of developing pupils' enthusiasm.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of all pupils but is especially vigilant in supporting those who need extra encouragement and assistance. Parents appreciate this positive aspect. About 30 pupils attend 'nurture groups' every week with an empathetic teaching assistant who is skilled at encouraging them to face their problems. Evaluations from pupils themselves indicate their many successes, for example 'I have learnt to get rid of my worries' and 'I have learnt to calm myself down'. Such effective support has also helped to improve behaviour in the school. The school is proactive in raising racial awareness among staff and pupils when it invites speakers from outside agencies to come into school to lead discussions.

Very effective support is given to those with learning difficulties and disabilities, overseen by a very experienced coordinator. Good liaison with many outside agencies also contributes to good standards of care. Child protection arrangements are secure and good attention is given to first aid and assessing and minimising risks, so that pupils are kept safe. Pupils get very clear and helpful guidance how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The strong leadership of the headteacher is raising achievement and standards of care. She has worked tirelessly with her staff to make the changes that lead to improvements. However, systems to monitor the effectiveness of teaching are ineffective.

Senior staff have an accurate picture of where the school is now. Leaders and managers have thorough systems in place to assess, track and evaluate the impact of initiatives, which lead to accelerated progress and pupils achieving higher standards. Senior staff react energetically and determinedly as issues arise. Ways of checking on how well things are going include regular interviewing of pupils by subject leaders. This has helped pupils to become more confident and to raise standards. Overall the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Governors offer strong support to the headteacher and staff and have strengths in understanding data. They have a better understanding of monitoring how effective the school is, including the impact of its spending. Statutory requirements are fully met. Recent building work has much improved the accommodation, which is now very good. Pupils love the new library. Resources are good and well used. Staff work effectively together and have recently benefited from plentiful and relevant training.

Extra funding has been well used when planning future improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Sticklepath Primary School Woodville Estate Sticklepath Barnstaple Devon EX31 2HH

28 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Many thanks for welcoming the inspectors into the school. We enjoyed talking to you on the first day of the inspection and we missed your company when the school was closed by the snow. You told us that you thought that the school has improved a lot recently and we agree.

These are some of the things we liked best:

- you are making satisfactory progress because teaching is improving
- you behave well and get on very well with all the adults in the school and with one another
- the school cares for you well and works hard to give you the help you need to make progress in your studies.

There are some ways in which the school can get even better:

- teachers should keep up their good efforts to improve your standards
- there should be more emphasis on teaching the arts
- teaching would be better still if the school checked up on lessons more thoroughly.

Once again, thank you for helping us during the inspection.

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan Lead inspector