



Axminster Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113059
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289497
Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Tom Simpson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stoney Lane
School category	Community		Axminster
Age range of pupils	4–11		EX13 5BU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01297 33005
Number on roll (school)	204	Fax number	01297 34557
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rupert Butler
		Headteacher	A Harvell
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007	Inspection number 289497
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school serving a socially diverse community. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The number of pupils who enter and leave the school other than at the normal time is slightly above average. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is average overall. There have been a significant number of staff changes in the recent past.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with several strengths. It has successfully addressed the main concerns raised in the last report. For example, provision for children in the Foundation Stage, which was a key issue, is now good. Another of its strengths is the good and effective way that pupils from all backgrounds are cared for, guided and supported. They are known well to staff as individuals and are successfully encouraged to develop in self-confidence. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. They behave well and enjoy both taking personal responsibility and contributing to the local and wider community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A satisfactory curriculum with some good features is provided. One parent commented, 'I would recommend Axminster School to anyone.'

A number of initiatives for improvement have been implemented recently. These include better systems for assessing pupils' academic progress and providing them with targets for improvement. Another is aimed at improving teaching and learning. Several are relatively new, however, and have not been in place long enough for them to have fully impacted on standards. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior management is supportive, particularly of the significant number of inexperienced teachers in the school, and is keen to try out new ideas. An appropriate management structure is in place and the staff work well together as a team. Because of significant staff changes, this again has not yet had a chance to fully impact on the work of the school. However, as a result of the enthusiasm and commitment of staff at all levels and the recently introduced strategies, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are examples of good teaching. As a result, standards are average. Achievement is also satisfactory overall. However, it is inconsistent. It is sometimes good, as in the Reception class. On the other hand, some more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not achieving as well as they might; as the tasks provided for them are not always challenging enough. Systems for measuring and tracking pupils' individual progress in key subjects are thorough. However, the results of assessment are not always used enough to plan the work set for pupils in lessons. Also, data is not analysed enough to monitor the overall performance of different groups of pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use data more effectively to monitor the performance of different groups of pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and to set able pupils more challenging work.
- Ensure that all new initiatives are consistently implemented and reflected in raised standards, particularly in Year 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Achievement is not, however, consistent throughout the school. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start in school and often make good progress. In 2006, in the end of Year 6 national tests, results were slightly above average, confirming a pattern of steady improvement over time and satisfactory achievement. The assessments of pupils at the end of Year 2 have been consistently around average for the past few years. However, in 2006 they were below average, with a particular weakness in science where the results were low. A number of factors impinged on these Year 2 results including an unusually high number of pupils in the class with learning difficulties and significant pupil mobility. However, evidence from lessons and the analysis of work indicate that, although standards in Year 2 are now average, some higher ability pupils are underachieving because the work set for them is not always challenging enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress overall and some make good progress in relation to their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and their parents confirm this. Attendance is above average and the school has successfully implemented strategies for improving the punctuality of the few latecomers. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, and this helps their learning. They are clear about the behaviour code in class and around school and value the reward systems of 'star pupils' and house points. Pupils get on well together and older pupils support the younger ones through mixed age 'friendship circles' in lessons and at play. The two pupils who were temporarily excluded last year responded well to the school's programme of support and there have been no exclusions this year.

Pupils contribute well to the school and wider local community. Handling small budgets in their charity fund raising work and links to local businesses help pupils gain satisfactory insights into their future economic well-being. Pupils throughout the school respond well to the many opportunities to take responsibility. Year 6 pupils, in particular, are fully involved in the life of the school. They told inspectors how much they enjoyed this. Pupils feel safe and secure in school as a result of the good systems for mutual support and good levels of care from all staff. They show a good understanding of what is needed to keep fit and healthy and enjoy the wide range of sports and keep-fit activities provided by the school and partner institutions.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual and cultural development has improved significantly since the last inspection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there is good teaching in some lessons which is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The school is currently implementing new initiatives to improve teaching further. A particular strength of teaching is the positive way in which pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are managed and treated with respect. As a result, behaviour and relationships at all levels are good. Another strength is the enthusiasm of teachers and other staff and this is regularly reflected in the attitudes of the pupils towards their work. Planning is generally effective and the objectives of lessons made clear to pupils so that they are able to measure how well they have got on. Occasionally, however, some lesson time is wasted, for example when the pace of an activity is too slow or when a teacher dominates a class discussion too much.

Appropriate assessment procedures are developing well. However, there is still some inconsistency in the accuracy of some assessments and in the use of assessment data to plan the work set for pupils in some lessons. As a result some pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, are not set challenging enough work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good and provision has improved since the last inspection. The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 meets requirements and provides well for pupils' personal, social and emotional development. However, curriculum planning lacks a consistent approach across the school. For example, whilst some teachers identify opportunities to make links between subjects, there is no systematic approach to developing links to make learning more meaningful to pupils. There has been significant improvement in provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from satisfactory provision which ensures that they make at least satisfactory progress. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils enjoy learning and understand the need to make sensible choices. The innovative weekly 'Learning Wheel' of creative, technical and sporting activities for all pupils widens the range of learning opportunities and provides interest and enjoyment for all involved. There is a good range of visits, residential trips, clubs and other activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils are well cared for. From the Reception Year onwards, children are successfully encouraged to develop in confidence and self-esteem and this forms a secure base for their personal and academic development. Effective child protection arrangements are in place and there are good links with parents, carers and outside agencies to

support vulnerable children. The high expectations of behaviour and good relationships throughout the school enable pupils to work and play together without fear of bullying or harassment.

The school has recently developed an effective system for setting academic targets. These targets are understood by the pupils. Teachers often give good feedback to pupils in class to help them improve but do not write enough informative comments, linked to progress towards their targets, when marking their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has created positive relationships at all levels. He has nurtured staff well through a significant period of change by, for example, successfully enabling them to develop the skills they need to fulfil their responsibilities. With the senior leadership team, he has introduced several recent initiatives for improvement. It is too soon for these, however, to have had an impact on standards.

An appropriate management structure and a relevant cycle for monitoring the school's work have been established, but recent staff changes have meant that the impact of these on school improvement has still to be realised. The school's strategy for analysing data in order to monitor the overall performance of different groups of pupils is still underdeveloped, particularly in Years 1 and 2. As a result, the school is not yet in a position to target resources towards needs as effectively as it could.

The governing body is supportive of the school and actively involved in promoting improvement. Procedures for self-evaluation are satisfactory overall and some aspects are strong, for example the way they successfully involve parents, governors and pupils at appropriate stages. As a result, the school has a clear idea of what it needs to do next to improve further. There is a strong vision for raising standards among all staff and an ethos of mutual support.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. You told us how much you like your school. We enjoyed our visit and now want to share with you what we thought about your school. We found that your school is satisfactory with several strengths. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. You mostly reach at least satisfactory standards in your work.

Here are some of the things we found to be particularly good:

- You are well behaved and your personal development is good.
- You are well cared for, supported and guided by the adults at the school.
- The headteacher and other staff are working hard to make the school even better.
- Aspects of the curriculum provided for you are imaginative and you have a good range of out of class activities.

- Here are some of the things we have suggested to help the school improve:
- The way that the school looks at how well different classes and groups are doing needs to be improved and some pupils need to be given more challenging work, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- New ways, that the school has introduced to improve what it does, now need to result in even higher standards of work.

Thank you again for your help.