



Littletown Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113099
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289507
Inspection dates 30–31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Laurie Lewin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Honiton Bottom Road
School category	Community		Honiton
Age range of pupils	3–11		EX14 2EG
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01404 548749
Number on roll (school)	368	Fax number	01404 47432
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jo Frith
		Headteacher	Caroline Bond
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school. It has its own funded Nursery. Nearly all of the pupils are White British. The overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly above the national average. However, in some year groups the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well above the average level. On entry to school most children usually show attainment that matches the expected level for their age, but this varies each year. In some years the attainment of children starting school is below the expected level. The last inspection in 2004 designated the school as underachieving.

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 that has improved rapidly as a result of good leadership and management. Its previous designation as underachieving no longer applies. Very good leadership by the headteacher has helped the school strengthen its staffing and move the quality of teaching to a good level. As a result, pupils now make sound progress and attain average standards. Good teaching is putting pupils on track to improve their achievement to a good level in the not-too-distant future. The school has become good at linking with other partner organisations to find ways of boosting staff skills and pupils' performance. The school's recent success in improvement is also a result of the very effective way in which teachers record, analyse and use pupils' performance data. This means they are clear about the main areas that help to accelerate pupils' progress and plan lessons accordingly.

Recent changes in Foundation Stage staffing have helped strengthen provision to a good level in this part of the school. The Nursery accommodation is excellent and well organised. Last year children made satisfactory progress by the end of the Foundation Stage. The invigorated provision and the good quality work currently seen in the Reception and Nursery classes indicate that the children are well on course to improve their level of achievement this year. Across the rest of the school, staff have rightly recognised that, despite the improvements made, writing and mathematics remain the weaker strands of pupils' work.

As a result of good provision for care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to school. Their good involvement in sports and fitness activities and the strong emphasis on maintaining proper diets means individuals have a good knowledge of how to stay fit and healthy. Good and interesting curriculum provision, well enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, ensures that pupils enjoy their time in school.

The headteacher, very ably supported by her two assistant headteachers, has created an atmosphere in which staff work together as an enthusiastic and highly effective team. They are fully committed to driving the school's good quality action plans forward. Governors work closely with staff and carry out their roles very effectively. The school evaluates its own performance accurately and rigorously. It has created lots of momentum to ensure that success builds on success in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by ensuring they learn to write for a wider range of purposes and in a broader range of styles.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by developing their problem-solving skills to a greater extent.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

School data confirms that most children reached the expected levels by the end of the Foundation Stage last year. However, current observations in the Nursery and Reception classes show children learning to work confidently and at a good rate, strongly indicating that achievement is well on track to move up a gear by the end of the academic year. Similarly, across the rest of the school, good teaching is rapidly breaking down the legacy of previous underachievement. Work with other local schools and with local authority initiatives has given the school a successful range of strategies to boost achievement. Staff realise that the transformation in achievement does not happen overnight. Nonetheless, the green shoots of success are very evident. For example, test results show impressive improvement by pupils identified as previously underachieving in writing. There is ample evidence to show that pupils' progress continues to accelerate. Writing remains the weakest aspect of pupils' achievement. Also, the school correctly identifies pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems as an area for development. Strong support for pupils with learning difficulties ensures that they progress as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The buzz of activity and common occurrence of smiles in lessons and activities shows that much enjoyment in learning is the order of the day around the school. Work in personal, social and health education lessons, class discussions and science lessons gives pupils a good understanding of how to look after themselves and stay safe. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that in most instances they are confident to talk to adults about problems that occur. However, a few mentioned that occasionally peer group pressure made them feel reluctant to seek help when difficulties with other pupils occurred. Pupils make a strong contribution to the community through their fundraising activities. A good range of experiences, for example, with handling small budgets for projects, equips pupils with sound skills to help ensure their future economic well-being. Pupils gain very good social awareness and ability to handle responsibility. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils confidently carry out their roles as play leaders at breaktimes, and as librarians and office monitors at lunchtime. Pupils' attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have benefited from intensive and successful involvement in local authority support programmes, training and work with other local schools. Because of this, the school can now be confident that staff possess good skills to help them continuously

improve pupils' learning. Good learning in lessons is now evident from the Nursery age group through to Year 6. Having moved the school from underachieving into satisfactory achievement, current good practice shows a strong capacity to improve pupils' progress to a good level in the near future. Planning for lessons is meticulous and caters very precisely for pupils of different ability levels. Learning objectives are very clear. The pace of learning is good and pupils find the work both challenging and interesting. Teaching assistants do a very effective job of supporting individuals and groups of pupils. The school rightly sees the need for teachers to increase the range of opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes and to reinforce skills with problem solving in mathematics as central to its improvement drive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

'Teachers try really hard to make our work fun... We get lots of creative-type things to do for homework.... I thought learning our times tables to music was a really good fun way of doing things... We get really good activities and trips.' These were just a few of the comments from pupils that convinced inspectors that the school's curriculum is promoting an enjoyment in learning and good personal development. In addition, the school has invested much energy in planning work that caters for a wide variety of learning styles – for example, ensuring pupils who learn best through visual or sound stimuli are equally catered for in lessons. Initiatives such as this have played a key part in helping the staff boost pupils' achievement in recent times. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, with a broad range of practically based activities to boost children's learning. The school has done much to upgrade its computer facilities. It has rightly identified the need to develop the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know the pupils well and establish good relationships with them. In this way they provide strong support and encouragement for individuals. All procedures are in place to ensure pupils' safety and security, including full child protection procedures. The school maintains a good flow of information to keep parents informed and involves them closely in supporting pupils' progress. The school has many good procedures to seek pupils' views and discuss problem areas.

However, discussions with older pupils reveal that there is scope for building pupils' confidence to seek adult help if they experience difficulty with the behaviour of others. Staff make very good use of all assessment information to help guide pupils' progress in the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has come a long way since its last inspection in 2004. Difficulties with staffing have been overcome and a strong core management team has been established. Under the very skilful leadership of the headteacher, wide-ranging initiatives have become securely embedded to ensure 'improving pupils' achievement' is kept at the heart of the school's main mission. Although 'mission accomplished' may not yet have been achieved in terms of moving from being an underachieving school to a good one, reaching this outcome is now well in sight. The grit, determination and strong teamwork shown by governors and staff have brought the school back on course. As part of its very clear plans to keep improvement moving, the school rightly identifies the need to help its middle managers develop their roles.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

- I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed coming to visit your school. Thank you for making us so welcome and helping us during the school's inspection. We especially enjoyed hearing about the activities you said you liked. The school is doing a satisfactory job, and is improving rapidly. Here are some of the things we noticed:
- Your achievement as you move through the school is satisfactory and there are clear signs that it is improving all the time.
- You behave well in lessons and show positive attitudes to work.
- You have an interesting curriculum that helps you to enjoy your work.
- You like your teachers and teaching assistants and you told us 'they try hard to make the lessons interesting and fun'. We also think they do a good job.
- You appreciate all of the extra activities that the school provides for you.
- The school does a good job of taking care of you.
- Your headteacher, the staff and the governors work well together to improve the school.

To make your school even better we think your teachers are right to keep focusing on improving your writing and maths. In particular they have spotted that you need to be even more skilful in writing for different purposes and in different styles. Also, they are right in focusing on making you even better at solving problems using your maths skills. I am sure you will want to help them by working really hard in these areas.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.