

Langtree Community School and Nursery Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113160
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289530
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Alexander Paul Baxter

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 on roll	
School	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Soby
Headteacher	Helen Mellody
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Langtree Torrington EX38 8NF
Telephone number	01805 601354
Fax number	01805 601354

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small rural primary school has an attached nursery unit. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is near the national average, but the number in each year group varies considerably. A high number of pupils have statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low and no pupils have English as an additional language. A significant number of pupils, many with learning difficulties, enter the school each year, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Children's attainment on entry broadly matches the level expected for their age. Much to the delight of all those associated with the school, a refurbishment programme, including additional accommodation, is about to begin.

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 and improving school. Achievement is sound and standards are broadly average. Given the constraints of the building, the school has done well to improve, for example, learning opportunities in information and communication technology and to sustain an appropriate curriculum. However, given the very limited indoor space available, other forms of practical learning opportunities, especially for children in Reception, are constrained.

The headteacher has created a calm and friendly community. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall and reflect the sound care, support and guidance that pupils receive. This is an inclusive school where an increasing number of pupils with learning, emotional and behavioural needs are nurtured effectively. Pastoral support is good and is enriched by good links with parents and outside agencies. This is evident in the pupils' enjoyment of school, their good attendance and sharp awareness of healthy living. One parent echoed the views of many when writing, 'I feel really positive about the school'.

Children make appropriate progress in Nursery and Reception classes (Foundation Stage), where provision is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where an able year group of pupils has done well this year to attain above-average standards. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities in Years 3 to 6. Standards have improved, particularly in English, but are constrained at times by some variations in the quality of teaching and the extent of pupils' learning difficulties. Across the school, an increasing emphasis on teaching phonics and on mental mathematics is helping to improve pupils' reading and numeracy skills. Strategies to develop pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills and improve their handwriting are not implemented as effectively. As a result, these skills are not good enough.

Teaching is satisfactory and has some strong features. Teaching is consistently good for pupils in Years 1 and 2. There is sound emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Teachers generally know their pupils well, but do not always make enough use of assessment information to focus their questions and to engage and challenge pupils at appropriate levels. Marking does not consistently indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. A sound curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, playtime activities and visits. However, pupils throughout the school do not have enough opportunities to learn by finding things out for themselves.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-evaluation and decision making are sound. They are informed by close communication between staff and governors. Improvements in standards since the last inspection, especially in English, and in pupils' personal development show that the school has a sound capacity to improve in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' problem-solving, investigative and handwriting skills.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of assessment to give pupils more precise information about how to improve so that they can learn more successfully.
- Give pupils more opportunities to follow their own lines of enquiry and decide how to organise learning activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their ability and starting points by the time they leave the school. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6. Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and do best in developing their social skills. By the time they enter Year 1, most meet expected learning goals. Many pupils now make good progress through Years 1 and 2 because the teaching is increasingly successful in developing their phonics, writing and numeracy skills. Pupils' progress is more variable in Years 3 to 6, but mostly it is satisfactory. Pupils who have joined from other schools have often underachieved in the past and several lack confidence. The school is addressing their earlier underachievement through a systematic approach to teaching emphasising phonics and mental mathematics. However, variation in the quality of teaching means that pupils do better in some subjects compared to others. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and science and, after some improvement this year, in mathematics also. However, the pupils' problem-solving, investigating and handwriting skills are still not good enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils think their teachers are friendly but firm and help them to learn. They say that 'learning is fun here'. Younger pupils are often so eager to respond that they call out and forget to listen, despite being reminded. Behaviour has improved and is mostly appropriate, but several pupils need focused support to conform to expectations. Pupils feel safe and bullying is not an issue because it is resolved quickly. Older pupils show solid understanding of responsibility by helping others in sports clubs, and by contributing appropriately to the school council and the community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy assembly 'thinking time' and the calm, reflective atmosphere. Their awareness of Britain's cultural diversity is limited. Pupils show good awareness of healthy living. They have wholeheartedly abandoned milkshakes in favour of fresh fruit juice or water and they like their healthy school lunches. Pupils develop sound academic skills and are prepared appropriately for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children are taught satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage, where their confidence as learners is extended particularly effectively. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2, where the teaching is sharply focused on what pupils need to learn next. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving in Years 3 to 6. The teaching of mental mathematics and of phonics is an established feature in all classes that is helping to lift standards. Across the school, relationships are good and pupils are encouraged to do their best. Teachers explain things clearly to pupils but whole-class discussions do not always engage all pupils effectively. Teaching assistants are generally used well in all classes to support pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to learn by exploring their own ideas or through investigation. This is limiting the development of pupils' skills in mathematics and science. Also, in Reception, current facilities and arrangements constrain the teacher's ability

to give children more independence in their learning. Pupils' work is assessed and marked regularly. Except in English, however, teachers do not use assessment enough to plan work for the range of abilities. In addition, marking does not give pupils enough information on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils have good opportunities to develop their personal qualities, particularly their awareness of healthy eating. The curriculum for literacy and numeracy is soundly embedded. Spelling and presentation do not always have a sufficiently high priority in curriculum planning. Opportunities for independent learning are not consistently promoted across the school. This is especially so in science, where investigative skills are constrained. Provision for enrichment activities is good, particularly in using visits and visitors. This was seen in a lively Year 3 and 4 history lesson which enacted local English Civil War events and inspired the pupils. There is innovative practice in introducing basic French and German language in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 and in the Nursery. This is helping to develop the pupils' cultural understanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know pupils and their families well and provide good support for individuals. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given appropriate support in class and through good links with outside agencies. Arrangements to safeguard the well-being of the pupils are secure. The school works closely with parents, keeping them well informed about their children's progress, especially in the pupils' annual reports. Parents fully appreciate the open and welcoming school ethos which promotes the pupils' personal development. One parent said, 'My child recently moved to Langtree school and since attending this school has been extremely happy'. The quality of academic guidance is satisfactory overall, with reading and literacy targets appropriately established. The strategies the teachers use to assess pupils' progress in other areas vary and are not used consistently to inform teaching. As a result, pupils are not always sure about the next steps of their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher gives clear direction and promotes a caring ethos. As a result, pupils' behaviour continues to improve, despite an increasing number with emotional and behavioural needs. There are good lines of communication and senior colleagues, staff and governors are fully involved in forward planning. The governing body, which has undergone a period of change, gives sound support. The headteacher's class teaching role was reduced last year. Since then she has introduced increasingly effective strategies to monitor teaching and to track pupils' progress. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and is strengthening. Much has been achieved in a relatively short period of time. This is seen, for example, in the way mental mathematics strategies are being embedded across the school and in the way pupils' phonic awareness and reading skills are being systematically improved. Planned improvements are not always focused precisely enough on developing pupils' learning skills and initiatives have yet to ensure consistently good teaching and learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	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?	3

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.

Annex A

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

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Langtree Community School and Nursery Unit, Langtree, Devon EX38 8NF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and observing your lessons. Particular thanks to the members of the school council who spoke with Mrs Bedawi. Your headteacher ensures that your school is a caring community where you feel safe. We consider Langtree to be a satisfactory and improving school. These are the other main things we found.

- Your enjoyment of school and attendance are good.
- Most of you make steady progress and reach the standards expected in the majority of schools. An increasing number of you, especially in Year 2, do even better.
- Your headteacher and staff work well with your parents and others to help you learn and keep you safe.
- You have a good understanding of healthy living and your attendance is good.
- Teaching is satisfactory. The teachers organise a good range of interesting activities outside of lessons.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have improved the way they work as a team and are helping you make better progress.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do these things to help your school to become an even better school:

- Ensure that you improve your problem-solving, investigating and handwriting skills.
- Make sure that teachers give you a clearer picture of what you need to do to improve so that you can learn better and more successfully.
- Give you more opportunities to learn by setting your own questions and by following your own ideas in subjects such as science.

Please keep enjoying your time at school and good luck in the future.

With best wishes

Alex Baxter Lead Inspector