



South Molton Infants'

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113168
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289532
Inspection date 23 January 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	North Road
School category	Community		South Molton
Age range of pupils	4-7		EX36 3BA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01769 572198
Number on roll (school)	89	Fax number	01769 572198
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Steve Hinchcliffe
		Headteacher	Pat Fewings
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves a small country town and the surrounding rural area. There are few pupils from ethnic minorities and none who speaks a language other than English at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, correctly described by a parent as 'a lovely, family- friendly school', which is at the heart of its community. Pupils, especially boys, start school with skills in communication, language and literacy and social development that are below the expected levels. By the end of the Reception year, most attain the goals set for children of their age. By the end of Year 2, average numbers attain the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, and the school generally meets challenging targets that it sets itself. This is good achievement from when they start school. The school has identified that boys make slower progress in writing and is working hard to improve matters, although approaches to the teaching of writing are not always consistent, and some of the work set for older pupils is too easy. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They have a growing understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives, knowing for instance that the former is related to diet and exercise. Behaviour is good and the school works effectively with parents to improve pupils' social skills. As a pupil said, 'Most children are kind to each other'. Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. For their age, pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. The 'Green Team' leads projects on matters such as recycling and saving energy and all pupils have a very good understanding of why these issues are important. All pupils also contribute to charities and take responsibility within the school.

Teaching is good, and so pupils quickly learn what is expected of them and how to work and play together, through a range of well-planned activities in the Reception year, so that by Year 1 they are able to learn independently and collaboratively with their working partner. Teachers are very well supported by a team of well-qualified teaching assistants, whose specialist skills are used well to widen pupils' experience in areas such as physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum is good, especially for Reception children, who have a wide range of well-planned outdoor activities such as the 'Forest School' at a local woodland area. There is a good range of out-of-school activities for all pupils. The school has recently adopted a revised approach to matters such as the teaching of reading and handwriting but the impact of these changes is not yet apparent in pupils' work. Care, guidance and support are good, ensuring that pupils' achievement and, in particular, their personal development are also good. Pupils are very well cared for. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and are beginning to use this to show them how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, obtained through detailed monitoring and evaluation, and have taken appropriate action to improve things. As a result, pupils make good progress in their academic work and personal development. There are excellent relationships with parents, local pre-schools and external agencies that ensure children get a very good start to their education in the well-led Reception year. The experienced governing body has a good understanding of its strategic role.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of key skills such as handwriting in order to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- Ensure that the work planned for older pupils is suitably challenging.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They start school with skills below the expected levels in communication, language and literacy and make good progress in the Reception year, by the end of which most attain the goals set for children of their age. They make especially good progress in their mathematical and physical development. By the end of Year 2, most attain the expected standards in reading and writing. In mathematics, the proportion exceeding this level is above average. In the recent past, boys have started school with lower levels of skill and this is reflected particularly in their writing. The school is using a variety of ideas to improve this. The use of specialist teaching assistants means that pupils do particularly well in PE and ICT.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are able to reflect on the meaning of stories and to recall the names of composers whose works they have heard, such as Debussy. Pupils generally behave well, although some need significant adult support to improve the poor social skills they have on starting school. They have a good understanding for their age on how to stay safe, for instance, when to seek the help of an adult they trust. Their attendance is good and they say they enjoy school, especially the trips and clubs. Their excellent contribution to the local community is especially evident in their understanding of and enthusiastic care for the environment. The skills pupils will need in later life are developing well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Significant features of the good teaching include careful planning based on teachers' good understanding of what pupils need to learn next. Activities are planned particularly well for the Reception year. Older pupils appreciate demanding work and report correctly that it is sometimes too easy. Teachers mark selected pieces of work very

well, with helpful comments to show the pupil or parent how it might be improved. The wide-ranging skills of the excellent team of teaching assistants are used very well to help all pupils to learn more quickly, for instance, through supporting more-able pupils or leading fitness sessions attended by all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for Reception children is very good. Exceptional use is made of the outdoor environment, for instance, the 'Forest School' developed in a local wood with the help of a community group. This gives pupils a good understanding of environmental issues. Older pupils experience a good range of subjects but the strategies used to teach some basic skills such as handwriting are sometimes inconsistent owing to recent changes in the school policy on these matters. There are very good opportunities for sport and exercise, including out-of-school clubs. Opportunities for pupils to receive individual music tuition are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for and are well known to adults in the school. There are good arrangements for child protection. Excellent links with pre-schools and visits to the child's home lead to a very good start to their school lives, which is much appreciated by parents. Pupils' views are taken seriously through the school council. They believe rightly that they have a real voice and that their opinions are taken seriously. Pupils' progress is tracked well and teachers are beginning to give good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, but, as the school recognises, there is scope for improvement in the setting of targets which pupils can easily understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led well by the experienced headteacher. Thorough monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress has led to a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which agree with the findings of the inspection. Appropriate actions have been taken to improve, for instance, standards of boys' writing, although some aspects such as handwriting have yet to be successfully tackled. The excellent and well-maintained building and grounds form an exciting and stimulating environment which promotes learning. Other staff contribute well to leadership and management, for instance, in developing the good provision for the Reception year and the good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The experienced and active governing body is effective in holding the school to account and in supporting its further development. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection, for instance, in boys' behaviour, and the school is well placed to make further improvements.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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	2
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 very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when I visited your school recently. I want to thank those of you from the school council and the 'Green Team' who told me about how good the school is. This letter is to tell you what I thought of your school.

I agree with you and your parents that your school is a good one.

- Your work is good. Some of you are very good indeed at numeracy. You are very good at PE and sport.
- You are taught well because the teachers and teaching assistants know what each of you needs to learn, and how to teach it to you.
- There are lots of interesting things to do in lessons and clubs. Reception children have exciting outdoor work at the Forest School.
- Your behaviour is good and you work well together.
- You know how to be healthy and safe.
- You know a great deal about how to care for the environment and why this is important.
- Reception children are given very good preparation for starting school.
- You are very well looked after by the adults in the school and your teachers give you good advice on how to improve your work.
- The headteacher and the other teachers run the school well.
- Your parents agree that yours is a good school.

To improve the school even more, I have asked the teachers to make sure all of you are taught skills like handwriting in the same way so that you learn these things more quickly, and to make sure that the work for older pupils is hard enough. You can help by telling your teachers if you find your work too easy.