

Wilcombe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113342
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289587
Inspection date	26 June 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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Heptinstall
Headteacher	Gary Chown
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001
School address	Lazenby Road Wilcombe Tiverton EX16 4AL
Telephone number	01884 253025
Fax number	01884 253025

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school serving an area of relative social deprivation. Nearly all the pupils come from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. The percentage eligible for free school meals is also well above average. Attainment on entry is well below average, with particular weaknesses in children's communication, language and literacy skills. The number of pupils who enter the school other than at the normal time is above average. The school offers part-time nursery provision, and has very close links with the on-site child care unit. The school recently received the 'Healthy School' award.

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 with several outstanding features. It is popular with parents, and the number of pupils is steadily rising. Its leadership has a very clear understanding of what needs to be done next to improve it further. The school has improved significantly since the last inspection, when it was on the local authority's list of schools causing concern. One key improvement is that senior management, staff and governors now work well together. Teaching and learning, and overall leadership and management, are now good and child protection procedures are fully in place. In view of the exceptional skill of the headteacher and the expertise and commitment of staff at all levels, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further in the future.

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is excellent and means that they get off to an exceptionally good start in their schooling. By the time they reach Year 1, their standards have risen from well below average to below average. One parent commented: 'I chose Wilcombe because of the innovative approach they have to early years education'. By the time they leave the school, pupils still reach academic standards that are below average, notably in writing. However, this represents good progress against their starting points. Achievement has been steadily improving over the past few years and is now good.

Staff are committed to raising academic achievement through maintaining the good and exceptionally enriched curriculum and a high level of care. They are continually developing the curriculum in innovative ways to ensure that it is creative, interesting and relevant to the diverse needs of the pupils. At present, the school does not plan enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the different subjects of the curriculum.

The care, guidance and support provided for the pupils are good, although the level of pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, is good and they have an exceptional appreciation of the need for healthy living. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

The school successfully evaluates what it is doing well and effectively implements appropriate strategies to improve its relative weaknesses. Several parents commented positively on the provision the school makes for their children. One parent wrote, for example, 'My children have thrived since they started at this school'. Another remarked, 'I feel the school has improved greatly over the past few years. To say it has done a complete turnaround would not be a lie.'

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in writing by providing pupils with regular, planned opportunities for extended writing in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards are still below the national average by the time the pupils leave, most, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. The small number of pupils in each year group inevitably results in overall standards varying from year to year. Low starting points, the movement of pupils into the school other than at the normal time and well above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities also impinge on the academic standards being reached. Children get off to a very good start

when they enter the school and make at least good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in gaining the skills which will support their future learning. Progress in Years 1 to 6 has been improving steadily over the past few years.

In 2006, the results of national assessments of pupils in Year 2 were average. This year they are likely to be below average. However, about half of this group have learning difficulties or disabilities and nearly half joined the school during the current academic year. Year 6 assessment results in 2006 were below the national average, with a particular weakness in English. However, this represented a steady improvement in results since the time of the last inspection and good progress against the pupils' starting points. The school's tracking system and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that current standards in Year 6 are still below average, especially in writing. They also, however, indicate rising standards further down the school with, for example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 currently on track to reach the national average by the time they reach Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils are highly reflective and very accepting of one another. They appreciate the many opportunities they have to explore and celebrate other cultures. Although attendance is still slightly below the national average, it is improving. It is adversely affected by the persistent absence of a small number of pupils. The incidence of unauthorised absence has dropped significantly as a result of the school's efforts. The pupils themselves say they thoroughly enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. Most have very positive attitudes towards their work and behave well. The pupils contribute effectively to the school community through, for example, the proactive school council and by completing sensibly questionnaires which seek their views. They feel that their views are taken seriously by the school. They enjoy contributing to the wider community by supporting charities such as Children in Need and providing Christmas entertainment for local elderly residents. The pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives and are gaining a good range of skills they will need as adults through, for example, running a 'healthy' tuck shop and managing the school council's delegated budget.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A significant amount of the teaching and learning at the school is outstanding and is having a profound impact on the progress that the pupils are making. A particular strength is the positive and effective way that the pupils are managed. This contributes well to their behaviour and leads to very good relationships at all levels. Teaching methods are varied and interesting and support pupils' learning well. Planning is thorough. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and challenge them effectively through, for example, open-ended questioning and by providing work that is well matched to their different needs. Occasionally, however, the pace of some pupils' learning is adversely affected when a discussion is allowed to go on too long. Rigorous procedures are in place to assess how well pupils are getting on and to track their progress as they move through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

One of the major strengths of the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is the way that activities are so very well matched to their diverse needs. This has a very good impact on the progress they are making. Pupils throughout the school enjoy an excellent range of out-of-lesson activities such as visits, visitors and clubs which are used effectively to enhance their love of learning. Wherever possible, different subjects are successfully linked together to make them more relevant to the pupils. The school has recently acquired a good range of equipment to support learning in information and communication technology. It is too soon, however, for the impact of this to be fully felt. Also, the planning for pupils' writing skills to be consolidated through extended writing across all subjects of the curriculum is a relative weakness that partly explains why standards are not as high in writing as in other important subject areas. There are very good links with other local educational establishments. Teachers from the secondary school, for example, have contributed to an arts workshop and there are close curriculum links between the work of the on-site child care unit and the school's Foundation Stage. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is good. The school grounds are used very well to support the curriculum and there are plans in place to develop this even further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. They are very well known to staff, who go out of their way to support them and enhance their self-esteem. There are rigorous procedures in place for child protection and to ensure pupils' health and safety. Requirements in relation to safe staff recruitment are fully in place. Particularly strong links have been forged with other agencies, such as the Family Support Worker and the Education Welfare Officer, and these support the pupils greatly. Marking and target setting are used well to guide pupils as to where they need to go next in their work. However, the school accurately recognises that academic targets are not yet sufficiently sharply focused on individual pupils' needs to maximise their impact on standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He has been instrumental in achieving the significant improvements that have been made at the school during the past three years and has both the vision and the capacity to rapidly move the school further forward in the future. He is well supported by a proactive senior leadership team whose members have strong individual and corporate roles in promoting the school's development. Members of the senior leadership team also set very good role models through the high quality of their own teaching.

Rigorous strategies are in place for monitoring all aspects of the school's work, including standards in English and mathematics, and informing developmental targets. For example, the school has identified weaknesses in pupils' performance in aspects of English and is in the process of implementing strategies to improve this. However, the monitoring role of subject coordinators has not yet been fully developed in all subjects.

A strong and supportive governing body fulfils its strategic role effectively and is prepared to challenge the school if necessary. Several individual governors, including the very well informed chair, work alongside teachers in lessons and help the school in a variety of other ways such as being members of joint staff/governor working parties focusing on specific areas of school improvement.

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Annex A

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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.

Annex A

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

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wilcombe Primary School, Tiverton EX16 4AL

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. We found that your school provides you with a good education with some excellent features.

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

- you are well behaved and your personal development is good; for example, you are keen to learn and have an outstanding understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles
- you are well taught and are exceptionally well cared for by the adults at the school
- you are provided with a good curriculum and an outstanding level of out-of-lesson activities
- the headteacher and staff are working very hard to make the school even better.

Here is one thing we have suggested to help the school to improve:

- make sure you all do as well in writing as you do in other subjects.

Thank you again for your help.

With best wishes

Tom Simpson Lead Inspector