



Low Trenchard Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 113412
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289615
Inspection date 18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Deborah Zachary

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lewdown
School category	Voluntary controlled		Okehampton
Age range of pupils	4-11		EX20 4DP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01566 783273
Number on roll (school)	57	Fax number	01566 783519
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Geraint Williams
		Headteacher	Alison Sedgwick
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lew Trenchard is a small primary school with just three classes. Because there are few pupils the attainment on entry varies from year to year, but it is usually below average or average. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs, but a significant number have some speech and language difficulties when they join the school in Reception. The pupils all come from a White British background and all speak English as a first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Lew Trenchard School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a school that is improving: in 2005 the Year 6 National Curriculum test results showed serious underachievement, but achievement and teaching and learning are now satisfactory. The pupils' personal development is good because, although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, they are given good opportunities to take responsibility and all staff give good attention to questions of morality and social development. The pupils are confident and say they enjoy school. The Year 6 pupils spoke to inspectors in a refreshingly open way, and Year 2 pupils interviewed at the same time were not afraid to give their opinions too.

Standards are broadly average in the Foundation Stage (Reception) and in both the following key stages, as pupils mostly make steady progress. In Reception and in Key Stage 1, literacy is not as advanced as numeracy because many pupils do not have good spoken language skills. Teachers provide more planned opportunities for developing speaking skills in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, and progress in reading and writing accelerates as they move through the school. There are examples of good teaching in various classes, but as yet this is not the case in sufficient lessons to raise the pace of learning to a good level.

The current headteacher joined the school in April 2005. Since then, significant periods of staff absence through illness have delayed some developments. Nevertheless, leadership and management are satisfactory. Well-organised management systems have been established, providing a structure to allow teaching and progress to be tightly monitored and ensuring care, guidance and support for pupils are sound. The changes have had a good impact on achievement in Key Stage 2, all the more noteworthy given the headteacher's high teaching load. However, the way in which changes have been made has had a negative impact on the cohesion of the staff. A significant number do not feel they are sufficiently consulted or that their opinion is valued. This is now slowing the pace of further development. Nevertheless, all staff are committed to raising standards for the pupils and the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the frequency of good teaching.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to extend their speaking skills in Key Stage 1.
- Build teamwork in the school and ensure that all staff feel fully consulted and valued.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Assessments at the end of Reception show standards to be broadly average to below average, varying from year to year according to the intake. Tests at the end of Key Stage 1 have also been broadly average for the last few years, but there is a pattern of lower reading and writing results and better mathematics results. The progress of these pupils is satisfactory, because many often have lower communication skills when they enter the school, and this affects their literacy development.

Results of the English, mathematics and science tests for Year 6 were well below average in 2005 and progress was exceptionally poor, placing the school in the bottom 1% of schools nationally. Results in 2006 were improved, particularly in English and science, though still below average overall and with some underachievement still in mathematics. Targets were only just missed in English but clearly missed in mathematics. Results of optional national tests taken last summer by the current Year 6 pupils show that they are well on track to exceed their targets in 2007. Standards in mathematics have significantly improved throughout Key Stage 2 and achievement now is at least satisfactory in all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Some parents showed concerns about behaviour in their responses to questionnaires, and the school acknowledges that standards of behaviour had fallen last year. However, behaviour is now good as a result of positive behaviour management strategies applied by all staff. Pupils listen carefully in lessons and apply themselves to their work. They are courteous and play well together. Year 6 pupils make a particular contribution to the enjoyment of other pupils through their work as playground leaders. Pupils are lively and have a good understanding of the need to keep healthy and fit, talking enthusiastically of their involvement in sport through the Huff Puff scheme.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their understanding of multicultural Britain is comparatively limited in this all-white school, but is broadly satisfactory because the school has recently had a focus on this area. In this small school the school council involves a high proportion of pupils in reflecting on how things can be improved.

Attendance is satisfactory. It has dropped over the last year because of factors outside the school's control, and with such a small number of pupils in the school, it only takes a few extra absences to lower the figures. Pupils enjoy their lessons and their school, but some are also taken out of school in term time for family holidays.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's records of lesson monitoring reflect the close and regular attention that has been given to improving teaching over the last year. This has been effective most recently in improving the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2, as illustrated by two good lessons seen during the inspection, on fractions and on graphs. In these, understanding of mathematical strategies was developed step by step and the reasons behind the strategies were clearly and effectively put across. Learning objectives are identified effectively in planning and used to involve pupils in understanding what they are trying to achieve. Plans are brief but show different levels of work for different abilities within the class. Satisfactory teaching in the school is appropriately pitched but lacks pace and liveliness, so pupils' attention can wander. Teachers' handwriting on boards does not always provide a good model of presentation for pupils. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning; for example, pupils in Reception were challenged and supported well by a teaching assistant during the inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is clearly planned and enables the progressive development of skills. Pupils in Reception are enabled to learn appropriately through play as well as being encouraged to concentrate effectively in more formal lessons. Listening skills are encouraged throughout the school, but planned opportunities to develop extended spoken language are much less in evidence in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2, and this is slowing progress in literacy. The school gives sound attention to the skills pupils may need in the future, for example, through effective use of information and communication technology. In Key Stage 2, the planned opportunities for pupils to reflect on and assess their own learning also develop skills useful in the world of work. Discussions in sessions of circle time promote healthy relationships amongst pupils, and links to the local church and a small range of extra-curricular activities also contribute to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All relevant procedures are in place to protect and safeguard the pupils, and staff show an appropriate concern for their welfare. As a result, pupils say they feel safe and they are confident that staff will listen to their concerns. Sound support in class for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities results in them making similar progress as their peers. The school is aware that there remain aspects of formal recording and planning for these pupils that could be better developed in order to make the systems of support secure. Guidance for pupils is also satisfactory. Pupils of all abilities know

their academic targets, although giving pupils individual targets is a comparatively recent development. Work is appropriately marked with some sound suggestions for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher currently teaches in class for three days a week, and has at times since her arrival taught for longer. This limits the time she can spend on leadership activities. A further challenge has been some long-term absence, both of the headteacher and of other key staff, including a teacher and a teaching assistant. Good systematic organisation and a determination to improve teaching and learning have been the key to the significant improvements that have been made in the last year, particularly to progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities were identified accurately through an external audit and classroom support is now appropriate. Data is analysed well and self-evaluation is sound. As a result, the school improvement plan effectively focuses on raising standards, with clear strategies and target dates. Subject leaders have a good awareness of what needs to be done in their subjects and are starting to be involved in monitoring at all levels. The local authority, with whom there are strong links, has provided good support for this process.

Governors are supportive and have a growing involvement in monitoring and a new committee structure. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the school and an effective relationship with the headteacher. A falling roll has placed pressure on the budget, but resources are deployed so as to obtain satisfactory value for money.

The large majority of parents' comments on questionnaires showed satisfaction with the school. A small minority, however, raised concerns about communication issues, about the number of pupils who have recently left the school partway through, and about relationships between staff and the headteacher. A significant number of staff feel that the leadership style has been more confrontational than consultative. Although robust leadership was needed in order to kick-start school improvement, and although some mechanisms for consultation have recently been established, these perceptions mean that the support the headteacher and staff are able to give each other is currently impaired.

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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?	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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?	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.

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 welcoming us to your school, and a special thank you to those of you who met Mr Clarke to tell us about your work. We think your school is giving you a satisfactory education, and there are some things we especially liked:

- You behave well and listen carefully in lessons.
- You make a good contribution to improving the school through your work on the school council.
- Pupils of different ages all help each other and play together – we were very interested to hear about the work of the playground leaders.
- You have some good ideas about how to stay healthy and safe.
- The headteacher is good at organising the school and checking on how well things are going.
- The older pupils are good at learning through talking about the work they are doing.

We think these things should be worked on next:

- There are already some good lessons, but there need to be even more of them.
- We'd like the pupils in Years 1 and 2 to get used to explaining ideas by talking in longer sentences in lessons. If you are one of the younger ones you can help by trying hard to do this.
- The staff and headteacher need to support each other more closely to improve the school.