

Northlew and Ashbury Parochial Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113414
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289617
Inspection date	4 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Nicola Lampe
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001
School address	Northlew Okehampton EX20 3PB
Telephone number	01409 221420
Fax number	01409 221420

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Northlew and Ashbury is a much smaller than average village school. Attainment is typically below the level expected when children start in the Reception class. An above average number of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. There is significant movement of pupils in and out of the school other than at the usual times of joining and leaving.

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 happy school, with a welcoming family atmosphere, which meets the needs of all its pupils well. It is led and managed well and, as a result, the overall effectiveness of the school and the capacity for further improvement are good. Staff have a good understanding of what the school needs to do next to improve. Governors are very supportive of the school's work and are well aware of its strengths and areas for development.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Provision for Reception children is good and gets children off to a good start. Although children make good progress in their Reception Year, standards remain below average on entry to Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school. Although, due to the very small year groups, standards fluctuate considerably year on year, standards by the time pupils leave the school at age 11 are, typically, above average. As a result, pupils are prepared well for their future roles in society. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support which helps them to achieve well. The school is particularly successful in integrating the significant number of pupils who enter the school mid-way through their primary education.

The school places a high priority on safeguarding pupils' personal welfare, and the care, guidance and support of pupils is good. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school – summing up a common view, one parent commented that 'I would not hesitate to recommend Northlew to any parent'. The good relationships with staff and the wide range of interesting activities ensure that pupils really enjoy coming to school, as is indicated by the above average levels of attendance. Pupils adopt safe, healthy lifestyles, and behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. These are key factors in the pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils' lives are enriched well by the good curriculum, although there are too few opportunities for younger children to access information and communication technology and for older pupils to develop their independent learning skills. The school's self-evaluation is good and effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their independent and investigative skills, particularly in science and mathematics.
- Provide more opportunities for younger pupils to use information and communication technology in their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and the very high proportion of pupils who join the school mid-way through their primary education – this can amount to up to one third of all the pupils in one year. Although attainment on entry varies from year to year, children typically enter the school with below average skills, particularly in communication and language skills. They make good progress in their Reception Year, although not all reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the school year. They continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that standards are typically in line with national averages by the end of Year 2. Progress in Years 3 to 6 continues to be good. By the end of Year 6, although there is significant year-on-year variation due to year groups ranging in size from

one to seven pupils, and particularly high proportions of pupils with learning difficulties in some years, pupils typically reach standards that are above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic about their school because they feel valued and respected. The school has robust systems in place to ensure good attendance and, as a result, attendance is above the national average. Pupils respond well to the good opportunities for them to show respect and care for others. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Especially close links with the local community and church and a good range of interesting activities enable pupils to make a good contribution to the school and, through support for a variety of charities, the wider community. Older pupils take responsibility across the school and act as play leaders during lunchtime breaks. The school council, although relatively new, is beginning to enable pupils to contribute to school improvement. Pupils can explain clearly why it is important to eat healthily and they have a good awareness of the importance of staying safe. They feel secure and are confident that any instances of bullying will be tackled firmly by staff. Their good progress with their academic and personal skills prepares them well for the next stage of their education and makes a good contribution to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are typically lively and full of pace and challenge, so that pupils are motivated and learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are ably supported by experienced and skilled teaching assistants who make a particularly strong contribution to the progress of pupils with learning difficulties. Planning for lessons clearly identifies varied activities for all abilities of pupils, making the lesson content interesting and relevant. Lessons are well organised and managed, and take full account of the mixed age classes and very wide range of ability in each class. Good use is made of resources to support learning. Teachers and other adults have good relationships with pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour and work, which help pupils to respond well. Teachers assess pupils' learning thoroughly and this information is used well to ensure that work builds consistently on what pupils already know. Pupils know what is expected of them because teachers share with them what they need to do next to improve. Group targets are also effective in developing positive attitudes. However, the school is aware that younger pupils do not receive sufficient opportunities to develop their information and communication technology skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a lively curriculum that ensures pupils are provided with learning opportunities that are well matched to their needs and capabilities. Partnerships between the school and outside agencies provide very good support for enrichment activities additional to daily lessons. The curriculum is enhanced greatly by visitors to school and visits to local places of interest such as Okehampton Castle and Dartmoor. For such a small school, there is a particularly good range of well-attended after-school clubs and these make a good contribution

to pupils' good personal development and positive attitudes. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a secure outdoor area for Reception children which supports learning effectively. Throughout the school, there is a generally good focus on developing basic skills. The school has rightly identified the need to review the mathematics and science curriculum in order to develop more opportunities for independent investigative work, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care for all pupils contributes significantly to their enjoyment of school and the good progress they make. Close links with external agencies ensure that pupils with learning difficulties are provided with skilled support and are enabled to participate fully in all aspects of school life. Robust systems for ensuring the school is safe ensure that pupils work and play in a very secure environment. Staff develop strong and caring relationships with the pupils. As a result, they are able to respond quickly when pupils are troubled or need extra support. Through the use of the whole-school assessment systems, staff have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievements. Tracking is now undertaken on a termly basis, thus ensuring early intervention. Pupils all have group targets for English and mathematics and are able to talk about what they need to do to improve. However, there is a need to make better use of academic guidance to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that the school offers pupils a good education which enables them to achieve well. The headteacher has successfully created a very positive and warm atmosphere in which all staff - teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff - work together well as an effective and enthusiastic team. The methods for evaluating the school's work, the effectiveness of decisions and the areas to be improved are rigorous.

Governance is good and the governors use their clear understanding of the school effectively to check on how well it is doing and support it in improving. They ensure that efficient use is made of resources and successfully promote the well-being of all pupils, with good regard for equality of opportunity. The school is rightly proud of its reputation as a very inclusive school and is very successful in welcoming and supporting the significant proportion of pupils joining the school after having started their education elsewhere. Good account is taken of the views of parents and other stakeholders and, as a result, parents are very satisfied with the school and the great majority are effectively involved in helping their children to learn. The school development plan accurately prioritises the important areas for development. The school has a good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

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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?	2
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	2
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	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

8 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northlew and Ashbury Parochial C of E Primary School

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. I very much enjoyed my visit.

Northlew and Ashbury is a good school. Your headteacher and staff care for you well and give you good support to enable you to learn and enjoy your lessons. They make sure that you are well taught and that you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe, and you do this well. You told me that you like school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. I agree with you. Your behaviour is good and you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do.

I have asked your school to do a couple of things to make it even better:

- give younger children more chances to work with the computers
- give you all more chances to do your own investigations in science and maths.

I am confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis Lead Inspector