

# South Molton United Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113454
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	289636
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Geoff Burgess

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	154
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Angela Hulme
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janet Sealy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	North Road South Molton EX36 3GN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01769 572656
<b>Fax number</b>	01769 572656

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average junior school serving the North Devon market town of South Molton. An average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British origin, with English as their first language. A broadly average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils join the school in Year 3 with average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

## 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 which has made a remarkable improvement in the past three years. Achievement had been inadequate and standards significantly below average. As the result of very focused and determined leadership and management and a lot of hard work by all concerned, achievement is now good. Progress had been slower in Years 3 and 4 in the past but pupils in those year groups are doing much better this year in response to good teaching. Noting that achievement in writing did not improve as much as in other subjects, the school made this a major priority. As a result of all the strategies put in place, pupils are making good progress in writing and standards are now above average in English, mathematics and science. However, the fluency and presentation of pupils' written work is held back by limited handwriting skills.

Improved academic success has raised the self-esteem of the school community. Its members have been energised by the confidence that comes from knowing that they are doing a good job. Staff and pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in school and are rightly proud of their successes. Leaders at all levels are able to take new challenges and opportunities in their stride. A parent, 'delighted' with her son's progress, commented typically that the school 'is a great one to be part of'. Despite its successes, the school is very realistic about what it still needs to do and is in a good position to keep on improving.

Key to its accomplishments has been significant improvements in all aspects of provision. Teaching and learning are good. Weaknesses have been sorted out and much teaching is excellent. Less-experienced teachers are doing well but understandably require support to match these high levels. The curriculum is good. Subjects planned with a common theme make learning relevant and interesting. A pupil comments, 'A lot of our lessons are fun'. The quality of care, support and guidance is good. Academic guidance had been a weakness but it is now a major factor in ensuring that pupils make such good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They feel safe and happy in school, know the importance of staying fit and eating healthily, and enjoy their community responsibilities. Relationships are very good and pupils know there is always someone for them to turn to if needed. Behaviour is almost always good and sometimes, as in assemblies, outstanding.

Leadership and management are outstanding, as shown by the extremely effective and rapid way achievement has been raised from inadequate to good. The school has made excellent use of the opportunities presented by the support it has received. High quality systems and procedures are now well established and the impact of very effective subject leaders on the development of their subjects is excellent. The role of the governing body in supporting the school through its recent history and promoting improvement has been vital.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the fluency and presentation of pupils' written work in all subjects by helping them to develop their handwriting skills.
- Help all teachers match the high standards in teaching set by the best.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average. National test results were very low in 2003. They improved each year since. However, in three of those years, pupils reached significantly higher standards in mathematics and science than in English, partly because writing standards were lower when pupils joined the school in Year 3. The school's records and pupils' work show that, thanks to its very successful focus on improving writing, standards are now above average in all three subjects. For example, more than half the current Year 6 are on track to gain the higher Level 5 in national testing in English, mathematics and science. This will see the school exceeding its own challenging targets.

Achievement is good. The progress made by pupils while they were in the school improved from poor in 2004 to satisfactory in 2006. Achievement in science and mathematics improved from below average to above, but it remained below average in English. The school's records show that this was mainly because of underachievement in writing in Years 3 and 4. The recent focus on writing noted above means that achievement in English is now good. However, pupils' handwriting is not well developed when they join the school and this weakness continues through the school. Good support in class means that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make equally good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown by their good attendance and very positive attitudes to all the opportunities they are given, especially in music and sport. Almost all are self-assured and well motivated. Their social skills and moral awareness are very good. Boys and girls have good manners and relate well to their schoolmates and the adults who help them. This is seen, for example, in planned weekly sessions where older pupils work with and support younger pupils. Pupils' cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of other cultures and faiths. Their spiritual development is satisfactory.

Pupils are aware of dangers and risks inside and out of school and show a good grasp of healthy lifestyles, appreciating the importance of regular exercise. They develop a good sense of citizenship by contributing to school life, such as keen participation in elections to the school council. Their involvement in the wider community, such as by fund-raising and in sustaining a community woodland, is good. Pupils' positive attitudes and good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills prepare them well for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's greatly improved procedures for monitoring pupils' progress tell the story of teaching in this school. Determined efforts to improve teaching in Years 3 and 4 have been very effective in improving pupils' progress, which had been weak. Although not yet up to the consistently high levels seen in Years 5 and 6, teaching in Years 3 and 4 is now establishing a much better base for pupils' learning later in the school. High quality teaching in the older classes has seen pupils now in Year 6 make outstanding progress in Year 5 and more than make up for the lost time in their earlier learning. Links between subjects and the creative use of

interactive whiteboards have helped all pupils to focus and become more engaged in their learning. Both were very well used in a data interpretation lesson involving temperatures in India. A good number of very competent teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning, especially for those pupils who find learning or behaving difficult.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A well-planned curriculum meets all the needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes. Literacy and numeracy are suitably emphasised but handwriting skills are not taught systematically in all classes. The way work in many subjects is planned around a common theme has made learning more relevant for pupils. For example, in Years 5 and 6, work on India featured in drama, literacy, mathematics, geography and science lessons. All pupils are learning French in class and some are learning Spanish as an after-school activity. Visitors and specialist teachers, notably in instrumental music, help to enrich and strengthen the curriculum. However, with the playing field out of commission and some distance from the school, it is difficult to cover some aspects of physical education. Extra-curricular activities are good. Pupils enjoy the wide range of after-school clubs and visits to places of interest, particularly the annual Year 5 visit to London and the Year 6 residential trip.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents appreciate the fact that their children are very well cared for. Rigorous procedures for protecting and safeguarding children and for ensuring pupils' health and safety are in place. A good personal, social and health education programme ensures that pupils have good opportunities to develop their personal skills. For example, groups of pupils work productively with trained teaching assistants to develop their social skills. The school makes very good use of outside agencies to support pupils who need support or extra help.

Rigorous tracking of information from a range of assessments ensures that teachers know how well individual pupils are doing against agreed levels. This detailed information is used well to set and monitor individual and year-group targets and to identify pupils who need additional support. Pupils use a good range of self-assessment strategies to support their own learning. They know in some detail how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher, governors and staff have worked together exceptionally well to transform the fortunes of the school. It has not been easy. Very tough decisions have had to be made and carried through and raising morale and restoring the school's reputation have involved a great deal of hard work. A key factor in this has been the wholehearted way the school community has worked with outside agencies to make the necessary changes. Leaders and managers at all levels have gained a great deal of valuable expertise and confidence from the process.

Expectations are much higher and performance is routinely evaluated to ensure that outcomes meet the much higher targets the school sets itself. Just as important, the systems and procedures put in place mean that the school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate,

up to date and based on strong evidence. The governance of the school is very good, with the long-serving chair a very active, committed and much appreciated 'critical friend'.

The results speak for themselves. Serious weaknesses have been eliminated and replaced by significant strengths in a comparatively short period of time. Inadequate achievement has become good and below-average standards are now above average. All aspects of provision operate at a much higher level than they did and they are still improving. This clearly shows how exceptionally effective and efficient the actions of leaders and managers have been.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Mrs Franklin and I would like to thank you for welcoming us to your school. The buildings are amazing but we think it's a pity that you have to walk so far to use a playing field. We particularly enjoyed sharing 'Red Nose' day with you, although you all looked very different without your uniforms. Like you, we think that yours is a good school.

These are the good things we found:

- You behave really well, enjoy learning, work hard and do your best.
- We agree that your teachers and helpers are good at making sure you learn well.
- Teachers make the things you do in class interesting and fun.
- You know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- We know you are grateful for all the grown-ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible.
- Your headteacher and the rest of the staff have done exceptionally well to make it possible for you to learn even better than you used to.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to improve your handwriting so that you find it easier to write and can present your work consistently well.
- Help all your teachers to be as good as the best teachers in the school.