

North Newton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123689
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292749
Inspection date	3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Cook
Headteacher	David P Gliddon
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Church Road North Newton Bridgwater TA7 0BG
Telephone number	01278 662140
Fax number	01278 662140

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average but numbers have increased in recent years. Pupils are taught in three classes each comprised of two or three year groups. Pupils come from a wide rural area including the local village and, increasingly, other nearby villages. All pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportions with statements of special educational need and learning difficulties and/or disabilities have risen and are greater than average. Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected nationally for their age. The school buildings are on a small sloping site with no hall or field. The school recently achieved the National Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. The most significant of these are the pupils' good personal development, the good curriculum and the outstanding quality and range of additional experiences offered to pupils during their time in school. Standards have declined recently. The school has identified this and is determined to reverse the decline. It has made satisfactory progress in addressing issues identified in the previous inspection. The school has a reasonably accurate view of its own performance in most areas. However, weaknesses in the way it conducts formal checks on the way it works have led to some inconsistencies in practice and an over-generous judgement about its overall effectiveness. Nevertheless, clearly structured plans are contributing to its satisfactory capacity to improve.

Standards are average. Previous above average standards by the end of Year 6 have declined over the last two years, particularly in mathematics. Standards in small schools are more prone to fluctuations from year to year; however, the rate of progress being made by pupils has also slowed and their overall achievement is satisfactory. The provision for children in the Reception year and their achievement are also satisfactory. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their attendance is outstanding, being well above average because they really enjoy coming to school. One reason for this is the exceptional quality and range of the additional activities, visits and visitors. One parent summed this up by commenting, 'The school gives all its pupils a great many opportunities and activities that are not available in most schools – particularly small ones. There is always something going on.' The school works very effectively to overcome the constraints imposed by the limited accommodation.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with a number of good features, particularly the management of behaviour and care for individual pupils. However, teachers do not plan consistently to ensure work matches the needs of all pupils in up to three year groups in their class. Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to think about what they need to do next. They are beginning to develop ways of helping pupils to become more aware of what they need to do to improve but pupils are not clear about this. Although aspects of care and pastoral support are very effective, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall because the academic guidance pupils receive is inconsistent and for some it is incomplete. The increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive extensive and effective support and this is appreciated by their parents. This additional support leads to these pupils making good progress, sometimes from very low starting points.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction within the school but despite considerable commitment and resolve, leaders have not been able to maintain the previous good achievement of pupils. The school relies too much on informal approaches to check the performance of the school. These lack a systematic approach and rigour, or clear summaries about what has been found. This makes it more difficult to follow up areas in need of improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that work is more carefully matched to the wide range of abilities in each class.
- Develop more systematic and rigorous ways of checking the performance of the school in order to be clearer about precise areas in need of improvement and about how well agreed practices are being carried out.

- Help teachers to consider how to involve their pupils more in understanding how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and the achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Children in the Reception year settle well into school. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of the year they attain the learning goals expected for their age group. From a relatively low starting point, they make good progress in both their personal development and in their understanding of mathematical calculations. Standards at the end of Year 2 have fallen this year having been above the national average for several years. Although close to national expectations, they are stronger in reading than writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly in line with the national average in English and science but a little below average in mathematics. Pupils are not clear enough about their next steps of learning in mathematics. Whilst pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of well managed support programmes, pupils in Year 6 are not on track to meet their collective targets for the second year running. Standards in swimming are outstanding, and standards in the creative arts are also above national expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The extensive and stimulating range of visits and visitors successfully supports their appreciation of the different cultures of communities across Britain and beyond. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and a sensitive approach and attitude towards those around them, especially those who experience problems. Behaviour is good. Almost all pupils behave well and recognise the impact of their actions on others. One pupil fairly new to the school commented, 'everyone is really welcoming and friendly'. Pupils contribute well to their school and wider community, being committed to their responsibilities around the school, for example as school councillors, and serving on the rota in Years 5 and 6 to be school buddies. Younger pupils are not given an opportunity to serve on the council but do carry out class monitor duties in their classrooms. Pupils have a thorough understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and of keeping themselves safe. Almost all participate enthusiastically in the daily 'wake and shake' sessions and older pupils appreciate the significance of the recent Healthy Schools award. They are gaining a satisfactory level of study skills needed for their next stage of education and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are several strengths in teaching throughout the school and good features in specific classes and lessons. However, there are also a number of inconsistencies which slow the rate of learning for pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well and this helps them to manage their behaviour effectively and establish good relationships. They frequently plan and organise very stimulating activities, including visits, special competitions and events or visitors to the classroom. These stimulate and motivate pupils and make them want to learn. However, in day-to-day lessons work is not always explained sufficiently clearly or matched closely enough

to the wide range of abilities in the class. This particularly affects progress in mathematics. Teachers mark pupils' work and offer them encouragement but do not always provide sufficient guidance about how they could improve. In Reception, the teacher plans an effective balance between adult led and child initiated activities. However, the difficult access to the outdoor areas limits children's opportunities to learn from their own ideas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well structured curriculum is currently under review, responding to the evolving organisation of unequally sized year groups within three classes. Computers are used well and personal and social education are strong features in all classes. The curriculum is strengthened by using teachers' specialisms across the school and by bringing in a wide range of specialists from outside. The school recognises that teachers rely heavily on published materials in mathematics rather than adapting materials to reflect pupils' interests and needs. This also limits the links between mathematics and other subjects.

The extensive range of high quality, planned events and activities involving visits and visitors is outstanding and significantly enhances the pupils' overall curriculum and their enjoyment of school. A wide range of activities demonstrates the success in overcoming the inadequate aspects of the accommodation. These include daily 'wake and shake' sessions, weekly swimming for all classes, leading to national recognition for high standards in swimming, and to pupils qualifying as regional finalists in competitive sport. Free music lessons, participation in dance festivals and choral events and a residential trip to the Isle of Wight are further examples of the many enriching experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All pupils are well cared for. The school works very effectively and with great commitment to support those with complex problems, carefully involving parents and other professionals. One parent told the inspector, 'the school has taken on all my child's problems and works well to overcome any hurdles'. There are good systems for identifying pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and frequent checks to monitor their needs and their response to the support being provided. The school is introducing new approaches to improve the quality of academic guidance but this is not being implemented coherently across the school or consistently between English and mathematics. Pupils are not clear about their short-term targets or about the guidance on how they might improve. The school rigorously implements procedures designed to safeguard all pupils with ongoing training for staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher successfully maintains a shared sense of purpose and direction within the school, with a commitment to the inclusion of all pupils and a vibrant outward looking curriculum. The leadership team has not been able to sustain the previous good achievement by pupils as it adapts to increased numbers and changes in organisation. There are good systems for tracking the progress of pupils individually and collectively and good use is made of this information in planning additional support. However, other aspects of checking on the school's performance,

for example observations of lessons, or checks on pupils' work, are not systematically planned or rigorously conducted. Points for improvement are not formally recorded in detail making it more difficult to follow them up at a later date. Consequently, the school does not have a complete picture of how well agreed practices are being implemented or of their impact on pupils. Governors fulfil their roles well. They are involved in key decision making and have recently established good ways to help hold the school to account for its actions. They have advanced plans to extend the school site.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	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	1
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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	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

5 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Newton Primary School, North Newton, TA7 0BG

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I recently visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a satisfactory school. I am pleased to say there are several aspects that are good but there are also some things which need to get better. Here are some of the 'highlights'.

- You work hard and make satisfactory progress in your lessons because your teachers do a sound job.
- You are brilliant at swimming.
- You behave well and are very thoughtful about one another. Many of you help with important jobs around the school.
- You really like school and almost all of you attend every day.
- Your headteacher and all the teachers plan and organise lots of excellent extra activities such as visits, competitions, special events and clubs after school.
- All the adults who work at the school take good care of you and help you if you are worried or have a problem.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on these things.

- Help you all to make more progress in your work, particularly in mathematics.
- Find better ways for the leaders to carry out checks on the school to make sure things are working out as they intend.
- Develop more ways for teachers to help you think about how well you are learning and what you need to do to improve.

I know you will do all you can to help your teachers with this and that you will have other ideas about ways the school could be improved.

Yours faithfully

Martin Kerly Lead inspector