



# The Topsham School

Inspection Report - Amended

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**Unique Reference Number** 131108  
**Local Authority** Devon  
**Inspection number** 293706  
**Inspection date** 13 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Martin Kerly

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 address</b>	Orchard Way
<b>School category</b>	Community		Topsham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11		Exeter EX3 0DN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 874498
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	209	<b>Fax number</b>	01392 876922
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Peter Lee
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Browne
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2003		

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## **Amended Report Addendum**

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is a little smaller than average. As part of a Devon Local Authority reorganisation the school changed status in 2005, becoming a primary school without Year 7 pupils. In September 2006 a Foundation Stage unit is being created with the admission of three-year-olds, commencing one week after this inspection. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances, with a higher proportion than normal from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Almost all are White British. The proportions with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and statements of special educational need are lower than the national average. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2005 after a substantial period of instability with several short-term acting headships and deputy headships. The headteacher was on short-term sick leave at the time of the inspection.

## 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 that is now improving further after a period of instability in leadership. The teaching is good across the school. The strong team of teachers maintained above average standards and mainly good achievement during the extended period of uncertain leadership. Following the appointment of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher the school has been led more effectively, enabling staff to work within a clearer and enduring framework where expectations of pupils are high. The school is now providing consistently good and some excellent teaching and consequently pupils of all abilities achieve well. Standards by the end of Year 6 are well above the national average. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and there has been very good preparation for the new Foundation Stage unit opening fully the week after this inspection.

Pupils' good personal development reflects the revised aims of the school and other key school policies which emphasise the school's commitment to work in partnership with parents and others to promote all aspects of pupils' personal development. Behaviour in school is excellent and pupils enjoy the wide range of activities provided. Those who are most vulnerable and with particular needs are carefully supported and fully integrated into the life of the school. Almost all parents report very positively about all aspects of the school. One wrote, 'parent "chat" is very positive' and another 'my daughter loves going to school and it has been a joy to see how she has developed socially and academically during her time there'.

Leadership and management are good. Leadership by the headteacher is good. She is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Following rigorous analysis of the school's performance the headteacher has led the establishment of clear priorities, setting the future direction for the school. The largely inexperienced but supportive governing body is beginning to implement ways of monitoring the school but these are not yet fully established. Governors are led well by a new chair who has a good understanding of his role and the wide-ranging responsibilities of the governing body.

Three main issues for improvement were identified in the previous inspection. Progress in addressing these was initially impeded by frequent changes in the leadership team. During the last year the rate of progress has accelerated. Standards in mathematics have risen sharply since the last inspection. There have been significant developments in the role of staff and governors in leading and monitoring the work of the school, which is now good, but further clarity and training is needed on how to do this. There has been substantial progress in assessment procedures and the use of increasingly comprehensive data when planning work and setting targets for pupils. However, this work is ongoing and not yet fully consistent or embedded, and this restricts the progress of a small number of pupils. The school has a clear and accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and, given its current rapid rate of improvement, is well placed to improve further.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify the respective roles and provide the necessary training for the senior leadership team, subject leaders, development teams and governors to implement a planned cycle for monitoring the performance of the school.
- Ensure the information about pupils' performance is used effectively to help set them challenging end-of-year and short-term targets that they understand clearly.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards by the time pupils leave the school are well above the national average. The attainment of children on entry to the school is marginally above the national average in a few aspects. By the end of the Foundation Stage, standards are more clearly above the national average, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Standards are above the national average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, they are well above the national average in the core subjects, particularly in English and mathematics, and in the arts.

Achievement is good by pupils of all abilities. Good achievement in personal, social and emotional development, begun in Reception, is maintained throughout providing a sound platform for pupils' academic progress, which accelerates by the end of Year 6. Previous data indicate that a few more able pupils made only satisfactory progress. Current performance data show some inconsistencies in a small minority of classes between teachers' assessments, the relatively modest targets set for able pupils and subsequent results above expectations. This reduces the reliability of some target setting and restricts the progress of a few pupils.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Whilst personal development and well-being are good overall there is some variation between aspects. Behaviour is excellent around the school, and pupils respond very well to one another in a variety of situations. Pupils have a good awareness of physical fitness and healthy diets, reflected in the recent Healthy Schools award and Travel to School plan. Their attendance is above the national average and they enjoy the varied activities in school and beyond the classroom. One summarised this by saying, 'I have had six great years here and am looking forward to my last year'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall is good, with their moral and social development being particularly strong. The opportunities for performing in concerts and other productions contribute well to their cultural awareness, but they are less clear about the cultural diversity of modern Britain. Pupils are keen to contribute to running the school, for example through the Redcaps initiative, and supporting local community events and charity appeals. However, the school council has a limited role in the way it manages its affairs. Pupils acquire a good

range of skills needed for the next stage of their education, meeting the challenging aims of the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers ensure that there is a rich and stimulating learning environment in classrooms, even at the very beginning of the school year. They use imaginative ways of presenting work to motivate pupils including the recently introduced interactive whiteboards, and in Reception make very good use of the outdoors to extend the range of experiences. The pupils' positive attitudes contribute to the very strong relationships and purposeful working atmosphere in all classes. Work is carefully planned. In English and mathematics lessons it is frequently matched to three or four different groups of pupils according to need. This is based on previous assessments, which are generally, but not always, accurate. Those pupils with the greatest and most complex needs are supported well by teaching assistants enabling them to learn alongside their peers. Although teachers set their pupils a range of short and medium term learning targets, these had not been established or displayed at the time of the inspection and few pupils could remember any targets from the previous year. The quality of teaching and learning is further enhanced by the use of particular teachers' subject expertise, across more than one class, for example in science.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

There are several significant strengths within the good curricular provision, which meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The Foundation Stage curriculum has been developed to provide a carefully tailored and integrated programme of experiences for the three-year-olds and those in Reception. There is a strong and extensive personal, social and health education programme throughout the school. The creative arts curriculum is very strong and was recently recognised by receipt of the Artsmark Gold award. There are extensive enriching activities beyond the classroom and residential experiences in Years 4 and 6. The curriculum is under review as it does not currently promote the school's declared aim for 'innovation, creativity and lateral thinking'.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good, with care and support being particularly strong and guidance satisfactory. Governors and staff effectively implement statutory procedures designed to ensure the safety and protection of pupils. The school works closely with outside agencies to provide good support for the most vulnerable pupils and sensitively meets their needs within school. The team approach

is appreciated by parents and all pupils thrive within a caring ethos. Parents of three-year-olds exploring the Foundation Stage unit for the first time on an introductory visit spoke very positively about the thoughtful induction programme for their children. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving with a number of fairly new initiatives to provide pupils with learning targets. At present pupils are unclear about previous targets and how they helped them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The recent appointment of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher strengthened the overall leadership and the pace of development within the school. The headteacher effectively clarified a number of working practices helping to ensure greater consistency for staff and pupils. She successfully led a major review of performance in all aspects of the school, consulting pupils and parents. This led to the production of a streamlined and clearly structured improvement plan with priorities based on the findings of the school's incisive self-analysis. She has also established improved systems for tracking pupils' performance. This identified a few anomalies in the validity of some data and is already helping to channel resources to specific groups of pupils, boosting their achievement.

In addition to the new leadership team, four development teams have been set up. These are designed to involve more staff in strategic planning, helping to address a previous weakness, and to support initiatives across the curriculum. However, the roles of the senior leaders, subject leaders and the development teams within school self-evaluation processes have not been fully established. Governors provide satisfactory support for the school and are committed to taking on a greater role in decision making and monitoring. Under the guidance of the chair they have agreed some new ways of working, for example regular visits and links with specific subjects, to provide them with better information. Some of these improvements require additional training and are yet to be fully implemented.

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## 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?	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

<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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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**

I visited your school for a day recently to find out how well the school is doing. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to a number of you in lessons and around the school, and meeting members of your school council. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I am pleased to say that for lots of reasons I found that The Topsham School is a good school. Here are some of the most important things I found to be good:

- you work well in lessons and make good progress
- your behaviour is excellent and you are very thoughtful about one another around the school
- many of you told me how much you enjoy all the interesting activities in and out of the classroom
- the teachers work hard and plan carefully to make sure work is normally neither too hard or too easy
- you enjoy the many extra activities planned for you beyond your classrooms
- everyone who works in the school takes good care of you to make sure you feel safe
- the new headteacher and others who lead the school have made a big difference in helping to make the school even better.

To improve the school still further I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on two things:

- decide exactly how and when teachers and governors will be involved in checking up on how well the school is doing
- make sure that you all know exactly what it is you need to be practising and thinking about in order to help you learn more.

Good luck in your new classes this school year.