

Orchard Vale Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131273
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	293731
Inspection dates	14–15 March 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Cowie
Headteacher	Jan Baker
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001
School address	Westacott Road Whiddon Valley Barnstaple EX32 8QY
Telephone number	01271 375074
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. The number of pupils on roll has now stabilised following a period of rapid growth after it first opened in 1999. Almost all pupils are White British, speak English as their first language and come from a mixed sub-urban residential area close to the school. Within the school there is a Speech and Language Centre for ten pupils, aged four to seven years, who come from a wide area within the local authority. Increasing numbers of these pupils stay on in the school after the age of seven. The attainment of most children on entry to the school is close to the national average for their age. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is greater than average. The school has a number of nationally recognised awards including Arts Mark Gold, Healthy Schools and Active Mark.

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 with some outstanding features. It serves all the pupils well and fulfils its community status most successfully. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. The personal development of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding, as is the overall quality of the care, guidance and support they receive from the entire adult staff team. Those with greatest need and most complex problems thrive and are helped to play a full part in the exciting opportunities. Parts of the good curriculum are innovative, including the creative arts, international links and aspects of personal, social and emotional development. These help to promote the pupils' outstanding personal development and the way they thoroughly enjoy their time in the school. This view is endorsed whole-heartedly by parents. One of many similar comments received from parents stated, 'I can honestly say there has never been a day they have not wanted to go to school and they always come out with a smile and lots to talk about.'

After a satisfactory start in the Nursery and Reception, pupils achieve well as they progress through the school. Standards have risen since the last inspection and are above average in national assessments and tests in Years 2 and 6. The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well because they are motivated by interesting work which is carefully matched to their needs. In the Nursery and Reception, although there is some good teaching, the quality is too variable between parallel classes as is the accommodation and access to outdoor areas.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The very effective headteacher is supported well by specific members of the leadership team who have substantial responsibilities. The school has some detailed and rigorous systems for monitoring its performance, especially the quality of teaching, and consequently it has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. It has identified shortcomings in the validity of some of the data previously collected on pupils' performance which made it difficult to monitor progress over time. It has not yet fully established systems to analyse the performance data of different groups of pupils, such as those in parallel classes. Nevertheless, targets for individual pupils are carefully set and frequently monitored and adjusted. The school has effective plans in place for maintaining the good progress made since the last inspection. These plans, together with the motivated and well qualified staff team, ensure it is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall provision in Nursery and Reception by ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching, and in Reception, improved access to outdoor areas.
- Ensure greater accuracy of recorded assessment data and better use of this data in order to identify patterns and trends in the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Standards continue to rise and are above average. Children in Nursery and Reception make satisfactory progress. Those currently in Reception, who joined the school in September, are making good progress because of their teacher's high expectations. Standards by the end of Reception are broadly in line with national expectations. However, the school has judged that previous assessment data at the end of Reception was inaccurate and gave too generous a view of children's attainment. This has caused difficulties in tracking

progress and judging achievement in Years 1 and 2. Standards in Year 2 have improved significantly. In the most recent national assessments in Year 2 in 2006, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national average reflecting the good achievement by these pupils. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 has been consistently good, especially given the pupils' relatively low starting points in Year 3. Standards by the end of Year 6 are now above average as shown by national test results, particularly in science. Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are on track to meet their challenging end of Year 6 targets in English and mathematics maintaining above average standards. Pupils in the Speech and Language Centre and others with complex learning difficulties or other problems make particularly good progress as a result of exceptionally good additional support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The strong emphasis on creative and performing arts helps promote pupils' outstanding spiritual and cultural development. Almost all of them relish opportunities to sing and assemblies are uplifting experiences. Behaviour has improved and is now good as a result of many sustained whole-school initiatives. The small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour are very effectively supported in managing their anger or frustrations. All pupils are aware of the consequences of their actions and their responsibilities to one another. They tell inspectors that they love school and this is confirmed in the near unanimous responses by pupils and parents to recent surveys. Attendance is improving and is now in line with the national average. Pupils adopt safe practices well and respond very enthusiastically to the many opportunities provided to take part in regular exercise and competitive sport, recognising the importance of healthy lifestyles. Pupils talk very thoughtfully about the many ways they help within school and the wider community. They are developing a good range of skills needed for their next stage of education and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There are many strengths in the good teaching, particularly in Years 1 to 6, which contribute to pupils' good learning and enthusiasm for school. In almost all lessons teachers and their assistants manage behaviour well. Joint planning in teams helps share expertise and promote a common approach. Teachers make good use of the new interactive whiteboards. Work is carefully matched to pupils' different needs and is marked carefully providing good guidance on what pupils need to do next. Teachers keep all pupils involved by frequently getting them to discuss in pairs what they understand or know about a particular point being taught, helping promote their speaking and listening and writing skills. The well qualified teaching assistants contribute strongly to the effective teaching and learning when working with a whole class, small groups or individual pupils. Although there have been recent improvements in the teaching and learning in the Reception year, ongoing inconsistencies remain in Reception and Nursery. Children are not all given the same quality of activities or opportunities to learn independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The rich and stimulating curriculum promotes pupils' enjoyment of school. The performing arts and physical activities are strong elements. They extend beyond the school day through a wide range and number of sports activities and other clubs. Personal, social and health education is very strong and successfully promotes pupils' knowledge of how to keep safe and well. Individual needs are met through careful planning and there is very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with speech and language difficulties. Teachers make good connections between subjects and the international links are making a very positive impact, as seen in the imaginative display of work in a Years 5/6 class under the heading, 'Africa through art, literacy, music, geography and design technology'. The curriculum in Nursery and Reception is satisfactory, but some children in Reception are not given enough opportunities to initiate their own activities and have limited access to the outdoor area, restricting their options when making choices about what they want to do and the range of equipment they can use to support their physical development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The united team of staff works most effectively to ensure all pupils receive high quality care, guidance and support throughout the day. Innovative measures include the structured support at lunchtime, the programme of 'circle time' sessions before afternoon school and the weekly 'family time' sessions. All of these contribute effectively to the comprehensive programme to support and care for pupils and enable those who are most vulnerable to flourish. There are detailed programmes to support the induction and transfer of pupils and exceptionally good links with outside professionals working with specific pupils, such as those in the speech and language centre. Good quality marking ensures pupils are regularly informed about how they can improve. Pupils and parents are involved in setting challenging individual targets and older pupils in particular are very clear about the next stages of their learning. Parents of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties are especially appreciative of the support received. 'My son has been helped tremendously by the special needs team,' wrote one, and another commented, 'My son has been supported through his good and bad times'. The school rigorously implements statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's vision for the school is conveyed clearly and with passion and is shared by the staff and recognised by the pupils. Consequently, the staff team provides a stimulating and rich range of experiences and the pupils respond well. The leadership team has been extended and almost all leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities well and providing good role models in the classroom. The newly designated leader of Nursery and Reception has a good grasp of the issues there and a clear action plan for responding to them. Leadership by specific teaching assistants is a significant factor in the exceptional contribution made by this team.

There are effective ways for checking on the performance of almost all aspects of the school. A number of school priorities have been identified following careful monitoring. Effective planning and leadership have then led to subsequent improvements, for example in promoting

pupils' enthusiastic approach to physical exercise and the improved quality of writing. The collection and interpretation of assessment data has also improved, but, as the school has already recognised, remains incomplete. There are some anomalies in the data, and although there is thorough analysis of the progress of individual pupils, there is limited analysis of any variations in the rate of progress by different groups of pupils, for example those who move to the school in later years and those who are more able. Without this analysis the school is in a weaker position when deciding what changes might be needed to current practice in order to raise achievement further. Governors fulfil their roles well, ensuring statutory procedures are in place and contributing to strategic planning and decision making.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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

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

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking with the School Council and the Little People's School Council, and seeing some of your work. I am pleased to say that yours is a good school. There are many things that are good about it and some things are excellent. Here are some of the most important ones:

- you make good progress in your lessons because you are taught well
- you are extremely thoughtful about one another and think carefully about the joy and wonder in our world
- you behave well and lots of you do a great deal to help around the school
- the staff plan many really interesting activities in lessons and beyond the classroom and you have lots of fun
- all the adults in school work together really well as a team to make sure you are all safe and looked after exceptionally well
- the staff think of lots of ways to help those of you who have problems and difficulties
- your headteacher has loads of great ideas for making the school so good and other senior staff help her to make sure they happen
- your parents are very pleased that you are able to go to Orchard Vale.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on just two things:

- make sure all the children in Nursery and Reception always have interesting things to do and lots of chances to work inside the school and in using the outdoor areas
- improve the way teachers collect and use some of the information that tells them how well different groups are doing.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Orchard Vale.