

# Alphington Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113073
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	311096
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Laurie Lewin

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	344
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Guy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Buckingham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Wheatsheaf Way Alphington Exeter EX2 8RQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 254291
<b>Fax number</b>	01392 421296

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large school with most of the pupils coming from White British cultural backgrounds. A small number of pupils come from a range of other cultural backgrounds and a few of these come from home backgrounds where English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than in most other schools nationally.

## 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 has improved very rapidly over the last year. During this, her first year in post, the new headteacher has inspired the staff and put a wide range of excellent initiatives in place to enable them to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement to a good level. The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the improvements and recognise the excellent work of the headteacher in invigorating the quality of education provided for their children.

When children start school they generally reach levels that are slightly lower than those expected for their age. As a result of good provision, they make good progress in the Foundation Stage so that nearly all of them achieve the expected levels by the start of Year 1. Pupils continue to progress well as they move through the school and by the time they leave they reach above average standards. English standards are good especially in respect of pupils' speaking and listening and reading skills. However, their writing skills lag behind. Pupils have good ideas and use lively vocabulary in discussions. Nevertheless, they sometimes struggle to express themselves on paper because their spelling, handwriting and sentence construction skills are not as good as they could be.

Strong provision for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with English as an additional language means that these individuals progress well throughout the school.

Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. This has been a particular area of improvement during the year due to very effective training and support provided for all staff. Teaching assistants work very effectively to support the learning of groups of pupils and individuals. Around the school, pupils are active and enthusiastic in lessons because teachers plan varied, interesting and sometimes exciting activities. The school has established sound procedures to track pupils' progress. However, pupils do not always know exactly how well they are doing. Nor do they have a precise enough understanding of the next steps to help them improve.

As a result of strong pastoral care provided by all staff pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well and are polite and friendly. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and look forward to all of the activities in which they are involved. Their attendance is good. They feel safe and have a good awareness of how to look after themselves. They understand the importance of having a healthy diet and keeping themselves fit. Pupils have a good range of responsibilities, including helping to organise some of the extra-curricular activities. Through this and areas such as the work of the school council and the green team, they learn a great deal about the value of contribution to the community. Pupils' personal development is well promoted through the school's lively and interesting curriculum.

The headteacher has been very successful in establishing a strong leadership team. Their effective work in driving forward improvement initiatives alongside the good energy and strong commitment of all staff means that there is plenty of capacity for the school to become even more successful in the future.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Staff working in the Foundation Stage provide a lively and purposeful atmosphere in which children really enjoy their learning. This was seen clearly in the eager and happy faces of the

children setting off in their coats and 'wellies' on a 'winter walk' around the school grounds. Children progress well in all areas of learning because the teachers and teaching assistants provide good support and encouragement to all individuals. In particular, the heavy emphasis on encouraging speaking and listening through good questioning and constant interaction ensures that all individuals are becoming confident and enthusiastic learners. Good teamwork and good leadership and management result in very effective organisation of resources that gives a good balance of activities in all areas of learning. Teachers gather much detailed information about children's progress. However, because assessment information sometimes lacks clarity, teachers' planning and target setting are not always as precise as they could be.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve their work.
- Raise achievement in writing by improving pupils' spelling, handwriting and the way they structure their sentences.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has brought about a rapid turnaround in pupils' achievement across the school over the past year so that a legacy of previous underachievement has been removed. Children's good achievement in the Foundation Stage continues throughout the school so that attainment is slightly above average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Current work seen in pupils' books and lessons shows that the improvements registered in the 2007 national tests are being sustained in English, mathematics and science. However, improvements in writing are not as good as in other areas. Pupils often show good skills when articulating their thoughts but tend to have problems translating this to paper. This is because their skills with spelling, handwriting and sentence construction are not as good as they should be.

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

### **Grade: 2**

'We have lots of fun in lessons'; 'Staff always try to make our work interesting'; 'Sport and activities at our school are great!' These were just a few of the very positive comments made by pupils spoken to that reflect the very positive attitude they have towards school. Older pupils in particular are very clear about the fact that changes made over the last year have made them feel much more enthusiastic about coming to school. Pupils show good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The work the school does in developing links with another school in Africa and studies pupils undertake of different countries are boosting pupils' cultural awareness especially well. Good relationships flourish throughout the school and, on the basis of this, pupils gain a very confident approach. Year 6 pupils spoken to said, 'Bullying is extinct in our school!' School initiatives such as the 'family assemblies' do much to ensure that pupils of all ages get on well together. In English and mathematics, pupils develop good range of skills to help ensure they progress well in the future. The school is very aware that more could be done to enhance pupils' understanding of finance and to broaden their experience of using information and communication technology (ICT) to support their work in different subjects. Children in the Foundation Stage progress well with developing their personal, social and emotional skills due to the strong emphasis the staff place on this area of learning.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Intensive training and support have led to teaching across the school being far better focused on the needs of individuals. Teachers now usually make good use of all assessment information to plan lessons that match pupils' needs closely. Objectives set are clear in all work so that pupils have a precise understanding of what is expected of them. In many lessons seen the interaction between staff and pupils reflected very clear questioning to help pupils advance their thinking and succinct and clear explanations. These traits were especially apparent in the outstanding lessons seen. The good relationships between the staff and pupils ensure that all individuals become confident learners. In this respect teaching assistants play a crucial role in backing up the teachers and supporting pupils very effectively. This is especially the case for pupils with learning difficulties/and or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language and is at the heart of ensuring that all of these individuals progress well. Occasionally teachers spend too long on whole class teaching sessions and this restricts their ability to promote the needs of all groups of learners. At these times the pace of work and pupils' motivation levels dip.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

As with teaching, much has been done to inject new life into the curriculum provision. Children in the Foundation Stage have a wide variety of interesting work planned for them and this approach is evident throughout the school. A wide range of trips and visitors coming into school, good quality provision in areas such as teaching French and lots of interesting extra-curricular activities and clubs ensure that the curriculum is well enriched. Work concerning pupils' personal, social and health education is comprehensively interwoven with day-to-day activities. This approach is especially effective in helping develop pupils' good social and cultural awareness. Despite the good improvements made and good quality thematic teaching evident in some classes, opportunities are sometimes missed to link areas of the curriculum and to make use of the good quality ICT facilities. Staff are aware of the need to develop a more consistent cross curricular approach to planning work and ensuring that ICT is used to the full so as to make pupils' learning as efficient as possible.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

The school is vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety and all procedures including those to do with child protection are followed rigorously. Staff have a very clear knowledge of individual pupils' needs and react swiftly to put things right when concerns arise. A massive upgrade to systems for communicating with parents, with frequent newsletters, opportunities to meet the headteacher and termly chances to meet with teachers, means that all parents have much improved opportunities to support their children's learning and become involved in the school. The school has worked very hard to improve the way in which it records and tracks pupils' progress. Teachers use this information well to ensure all individuals are moving ahead at a good pace. However, pupils are not given a sufficiently clear understanding about how well they are getting on or an in depth understanding about how to improve their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

This has been an invigorating year for the school. The headteacher has seized on improving all of the essential areas in the school that enable her staff to work at their best. There is a strong commitment in the school amongst the staff and governors to push their improvement programmes onwards relentlessly. The headteacher, very ably supported by her deputy, has established a strong leadership team who have very effectively helped staff move quickly on implementing new initiatives. Governors monitor the work of the school closely and through their wide range of backgrounds and expertise, provide strong support for the headteacher and staff. Staff and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They work well together in devising action plans to ensure that challenging targets are set so that development is sustained at a good pace. With the necessary focus on driving up standards in English, mathematics and science, the leadership and management of other subject areas have not been developed as a priority, and the school is aware that this needs to be addressed in the near future. The school works well with all partner organisations to support current provision and ongoing developments.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

<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>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

18 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Alphington Primary School, Exeter EX2 8RQ

- It was really good fun coming to see you. Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during the inspection. I especially enjoyed the good discussion I had with some of you from Year 6 – wow, what a bunch of chatterboxes! I learned a lot. I think you would all make very good future inspectors! Right now your school is doing a good job and has improved a lot over the last year. Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about.
- You work well in lessons and make good progress. Most of you reach good standards in your work by the end of Year 6.
- Your personal development is good. You clearly enjoy your time in school and get on well together and with the staff.
- The school's curriculum is good and you have lots of extra activities, visitors and visits that make it exciting and interesting for you.
- You told us how well you get on with your teachers and teaching assistants. They provide good and occasionally excellent teaching.
- The school works well to make sure you are properly looked after.
- Your headteacher has done a really good job of helping everyone work together to make things a lot better for you at school and to ensure that things keep improving.

To improve further the school should now:

- make sure you have a really clear understanding of how well you are getting on and that you each know precisely what you need to do to improve your work.
- help you to raise your achievement in writing by improving your spelling, handwriting and the way you structure sentences.

Thank you again for all of your help.

Laurie Lewin Lead inspector

**Annex B**

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Laurie Lewin  
Lead inspector