

Newtown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113083
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311099
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Izzy Einchcomb
Headteacher	Alison Greenhalgh
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Clifton Road Exeter EX1 2ES
Telephone number	01392 255540
Fax number	01392 424661

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Newtown is a smaller than average primary school. In 2005, as a consequence of school reorganisation in Exeter, Newtown changed from a first to a primary school. It has a speech and language unit for 15 pupils from Reception age to Year 3. In September 2007 these pupils were fully integrated into mainstream classes and are withdrawn to the unit (known as the Centre) for small group support. All of these pupils have statements of special educational need. With the exception of children attached to the speech and language unit, most children start school with the skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age, although this fluctuates significantly from year to year. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Newtown Primary is a satisfactory school. The school has an accurate view of its current strengths and weaknesses and is working hard to improve the satisfactory education it currently offers. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully led the school through a period of intensive support from the local authority, while at the same time managing the sometimes complex transition from a first to a primary school. This has ensured a successful recovery from a historic period of unsatisfactory progress and has secured improvements in the quality of teaching, subject coordination and assessment systems which are now satisfactory. Although there are signs of improvement in standards as a result, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of these changes. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, one writing: 'The school has provided my daughter with an excellent, inspirational platform to learn'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2, although few pupils attain the higher levels in writing. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the newly-formed Key Stage 2 junior department, and standards are steadily improving. The current Year 6 class are the first group of pupils to remain at the school until age 11. Standards in this class are broadly average, although more able pupils do not do as well in science as they do in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. The majority of pupils in the Speech and Language Centre (The Centre) make satisfactory progress from their very low starting points. However, although support for these pupils when they are withdrawn to the Centre is of a high standard, support in mainstream classes is not always provided by sufficiently well-qualified or trained staff. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils learn how to be safe and healthy and take responsibility for themselves and others. They enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by the above average levels of attendance, their good behaviour, and the good contribution they make to the local community. The curriculum is satisfactory, with a good range of additional activities, although planning does not always take appropriate account of the very wide range of abilities and different ages within classes. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with a need for additional training for both teachers and support staff in supporting pupils with speech and language difficulties. Provision for care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Staff care for the pupils well and there is a strong ethos of inclusion. Significant improvements have been made to the school systems for tracking individual pupils' progress in English and mathematics, although currently pupils across the school have limited knowledge of their own targets for learning. Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection and the school has a satisfactory capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make steady progress in their Reception Year to reach the levels expected for their age by the start of Year 1 because the provision made for them, including teaching and tracking of children's progress, is satisfactory. Strengths in this area are good links with the playgroup and the active encouragement for parents to become involved in their children's learning. Relationships between staff and children, and provision for children's care, well-being and safety are also good. Children clearly enjoy learning and make good progress in developing

their personal and social skills. This is because there is an appropriate balance of adult-initiated activities and those that children select and a good range of opportunities for first-hand experiences. One child said: 'I love playing in our garden, it's really special'.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards further across the school by providing additional professional development for all staff in matching work to pupils' different ages and abilities, especially in English, mathematics and science
- review the management of the new inclusion strategies to ensure that all pupils with speech and language difficulties have sufficient high quality support from appropriately trained staff and that their progress is monitored both in classrooms and in the Centre
- take steps to improve pupils' understanding of their own targets for learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

School baseline and tracking data confirms that mainstream children enter the school broadly in line with the levels expected for their age and that they make satisfactory progress overall as they move through the school. In some years, however, the school has significantly more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is found nationally. These pupils also make satisfactory progress towards their targets. In the latest 2007 national assessments, the Year 2 class, which had a particularly high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieved well. Standards were broadly in line with national averages, although the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing was below average. The current Year 6 class is the school's first. These pupils did not make good enough progress in some past years, but are now back on track. Standards are broadly average, but higher attainers do not do as well in science as in other subjects. Children in the Centre start school a long way behind their peers and make satisfactory progress from very low starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good. Pupils have good attitudes, they get on well with each other and behave well within classrooms and around the school. They enjoy coming to school, as is reflected in their good rate of attendance. They understand the importance of keeping fit and healthy. They observe safe practices around the buildings and in the playground. The ideas of pupils are acted upon through the school council and they have successfully been involved in improvements to the school toilets. However, pupils do not feel that they have enough opportunities to voice their ideas and opinions in class. They make a good contribution to the wider community by raising funds for charities. Pupils in the Centre enjoy learning and always behave well. However, some Centre pupils are clearly still finding the system of integration into mainstream classes distracting and, at times, this affects their concentration and learning. They thrive in the small group sessions in the Centre, because there is closely focused one-to-one attention with additional support such as 'signing' that aids their understanding, independence and confidence well. Pupils' satisfactory progress in developing

basic skills in literacy and numeracy means that they are satisfactorily prepared for future stages of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classroom routines are made clear and regularly reinforced, which ensures learning takes place in a well-structured environment in which all pupils can contribute. In most cases, classroom organisation is good and pupils are managed well. As a result, relationships and behaviour are good and most pupils behave well and listen carefully to teachers. In spite of recent improvements in the quality of teaching, however, it is no better than satisfactory in the majority of classes. This is because the pace of work is not always sufficient, and work planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils does not always ensure that pupils of very different abilities and ages are provided with appropriate work. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills have improved due to specialist support for literacy and numeracy. However, not all teachers are yet fully confident in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their teaching. Specialist teaching of children in the Centre is good, with close teamwork. This enables pupils to progress well because individual strategies fully meet specific needs. However, in the mainstream classes, teaching of these pupils and those with other learning needs is only satisfactory. This is because there is less opportunity for focused one-to-one support and because non-specialist teachers and teaching assistants need further training in supporting children with speech and language disorders. For example 'signing' and the use of symbols are not routinely used across the school

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. However, there is a lack of suitable software packages to enhance children's specific learning needs in the Centre. There is equal access to the curriculum, with planning for Centre pupils adapted and shared well to meet their identified needs. The school is beginning to get to grips with the new challenge of planning for mixed age classes. Whole-school use of the social and emotional learning programme is having a positive effect on pupils' personal development, helping them to become caring, responsible citizens. There is good enrichment through visitors and visits and a range of after-school clubs. The curriculum is also enhanced by opportunities for older pupils to learn to play musical instruments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Provision for pastoral care is good. Close links with external agencies ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are enabled to participate fully in all aspects of school life. Robust systems for ensuring the school is safe ensure that pupils work and play in a secure environment. Staff develop strong and caring relationships with the pupils. As a result, they are able to respond quickly when pupils are troubled or need extra support. Pupils say they feel safe at school and know whom they can go to if they have a problem. Bullying and racist incidents are

rare and handled effectively. Centre pupils receive good quality care and support that enhances their enjoyment of learning and develops their social skills well.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. The colour-coded assessment and tracking system enables the school to track the progress of individual pupils in reading, writing and mathematics on a termly basis, and the school is making better use of data obtained to set challenging targets and to plan intervention strategies for those slipping behind. There are signs that this is beginning to lead to improvements in progress. Pupils in some classes know and understand their targets and this is helping them to understand ways in which they might improve their work and the next steps in their learning, but this is not consistent across the school. Provision for academic guidance in the Centre is at an early stage, with development of computerised tracking and analysis not yet fully established, so that staff do not yet have access to sufficient data to identify precise targets for development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has successfully managed the significant changes to staffing, curriculum, planning and resourcing necessitated by the growth of the school from a first to a primary school. There are still a number of issues to be tackled in relation to the Key Stage 2 curriculum, planning and teaching in mixed age classes and resourcing. At the same time, the headteacher has led the school through an intensive two-year support programme designed to improve standards, provided by the local authority. Consequently, the quality of middle management in the school has improved significantly and subject coordinators are taking a more active approach to their role. Weaker and unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated and teaching is now satisfactory throughout the school. As a result, standards are beginning to show signs of improvement.

The Centre and overall provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have also been subject to significant and very recent changes. All staff involved with supporting these children are working hard to adjust to the new system and expectations. A considerable number of parents raised concerns about the lack of consultation, information and sharing of views about the introduction of full integration of Centre pupils into mainstream classes this term. Inspectors agree that the processes around mainstream inclusion should have been managed better.

The headteacher, staff and governors have sound systems in place to check how well the school is doing and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body is committed and provides sound support for the school.

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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
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3

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	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?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newtown Primary, Exeter, EX1 2ES

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleagues and I very much enjoyed our visit.

Newtown Primary is a satisfactory school. You are making steady progress and do as well as other children of your age, but we feel you could do better. We were very pleased to learn that your behaviour is good and that your attendance is better than most schools. You told us that there are many things to do and enjoy. We know that you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. This is because your headteacher and staff are pulling together to help you to learn and enjoy your lessons. They make sure you understand how to look after yourselves. They know what needs to be done to make the school better. As a result, the teaching and the work planned for you are now satisfactory.

We have asked your school to do some things to make it better:

- make sure all staff have up-to-date training to enable them to support all of you as well as possible so that you achieve better results in English, maths and science
- make sure that all children who find learning difficult get the help they need
- make sure you all know your targets for learning and what you can do to do even better.

We are confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis Lead Inspector

9 October 2007



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Lead Inspector