

Whipton Barton Infants and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113092
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311102
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Goddard
Headteacher	Yvonne Baitup
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Hill Lane Whipton Exeter EX1 3JP
Telephone number	01392 467556
Fax number	01392 460370

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large infant and nursery school serves the needs of pupils in the local area. The school has numerous links with specialists, many of whom are focused on children's health, emotional and language needs. Pupils come from a predominately White ethnic background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is well above average. The school has very close links with adjacent 'Children's Centre' and junior school settings. The school holds the following quality marks: Healthy Schools, Activemark and Investors in People Awards.

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. It has a high regard for the particular needs of the pupils and the community that it serves. One parent wrote, reflecting the views of most, 'I am very pleased how my child is being educated at this school'.

Under the astute leadership of an experienced and capable headteacher, the school reflects a calm, supportive, but suitably challenging, ethos. Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation is effective. Good teamwork ensures that the pupils' diverse learning and emotional needs are tackled sensitively and effectively. Parents give good support, especially in helping staff to sustain the effective care, support and guidance which underpin the pupils' good personal development and well-being. However, not all parents are as actively engaged with the school in supporting their children's academic learning. Despite an increasing number of children arriving with low levels of emotional well-being, all pupils feel safe and develop self-confidence and a willingness to learn, in response to excellent pastoral care. In a similar vein, even though standards overall are below average at the end of Year 2, this represents good progress, as so many children entered school from very low academic starting points and/or with learning difficulties. Because of good provision, standards continue to improve, showing that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Teaching and learning are good across the school. In the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes), children are nurtured skilfully by sympathetic staff and they make good gains in their academic and personal learning. Good progress continues through Years 1 and 2, where teachers and their assistants adapt teaching and support effectively to meet the pupils' needs. The pupils' personal and academic needs are tackled with equally good effect and staff make good use of a range of specialist activity rooms, for music and movement for example. Although standards are below average by the end of Year 2 in writing and speaking, they have improved and are broadly average in reading, mathematics and science. Overall, they reflect good progress in relation to pupils' capabilities. Whilst standards are improving, some pupils still lack sufficient basic handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills and the confidence to speak in meaningful complete sentences.

The additional support given to pupils with LDD is extremely well managed and is a strength of the school. Pupils behave well and adopt safe, healthy lifestyles and they are encouraged to do so because the school is an interesting, secure place to learn. Attendance is satisfactory and reflects the school's diligence in encouraging regular attendance. Teachers use suitably challenging year group targets well to lift expectations, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from sharp individual targets for improvement. Teachers give pupils good oral guidance but, at times in Years 1 and 2, their marking of work does not give pupils enough help on how to improve their work. This slows their progress. The curriculum is well planned in all parts of the school and is enriched by a good range of clubs. Learning is typified by a strong emphasis on practical work, with adults providing well-considered support. Links across subjects and specialist sessions such as developing language through movement are especially beneficial to the pupils' well-being.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's attainment on entry, especially in speech and language skills, is very low in relation to the level expected for children of their age. Children settle quickly to learning and, supported by good teaching, well-established routines and high expectations, make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Above all, children acquire positive attitudes to school. Whilst they do well in their mathematical development, many children still have difficulty using and understanding words by the time they enter Year 1. The carefully structured learning environment both indoors and outdoors promotes independence and enables them to make choices about their learning. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Excellent use of teaching assistants and additional adults means that children are very well cared for and they are supported in their learning very well. The wide range of practical opportunities offered to pupils engages them and makes learning enjoyable and relevant. A range of assessment opportunities, including observations, informs next steps in teaching and learning well. However, the school recognises the need to sharpen its assessment of pupils when they join the Nursery in order to track progress precisely.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills.
- Make sure that teachers, especially in Years 1 and 2, give pupils more written advice about how they can improve.
- Build on the school's good relationships with parents, so that more parents are actively engaged in supporting their children's academic learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, most pupils across the range of abilities achieve well by the time they leave the school. Pupils with LDD are very well supported, enabling them to make the same progress as their peers. However, because of the high number of such pupils who find learning difficult, standards, although improving, are below average by the end of Year 2. Children are taught well and make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Most children do best in developing positive attitudes to school and learning. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. This is because teachers are both effective in challenging pupils at the right level and sensitive in nurturing pupils' well-being. Although improving, standards remain below average in writing and speaking and are broadly average in reading, mathematics and science. In response to the strengthened teaching of an understanding of letter sounds and words, pupils' reading skills have shown most improvement this year. However, pupils' handwriting and ability to use grammar and punctuation accurately are still not high enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe in school and share good relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. Even though many pupils enter school with low self-confidence, they learn to work and play amicably with others, in response to sensitive support from very caring staff. Pupils who find learning with others difficult are clearly reassured by close, but unobtrusive, adult support. One pupil commented,

'This is a very happy school and we enjoy doing our work'. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Pupils demonstrate a genuine harmony throughout day-to-day activities and learning, and value each other's contributions and achievements, as seen, for example, in the 'Celebration Assembly'. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and play energetically, but with a good awareness of other pupils. Attendance is satisfactory, but despite rigorous encouragement from the school, a few pupils do not attend regularly enough. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the full range of school activities. Pupils have opportunities to express their views, in 'circle-time' discussions in class or as members of the 'ECO Council', where they show good environmental awareness for their age. Despite some limitations in academic skills and in undertaking responsibility for themselves, pupils' sound contributions to the community, willingness to learn and good social skills prepare them satisfactorily for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is mostly good across the school and is increasingly effective in improving the progress pupils make in lessons. Tasks are explained carefully and teachers use questions very well to assess pupils' understanding and extend their learning. Strong relationships between adults and children contribute significantly to the good progress pupils make. Close attention is given to developing pupils' social skills, raising their self-esteem and improving their confidence in speaking and listening. Teaching assistants support the learning of individuals and small groups effectively. The additional support given to pupils with learning difficulties is excellent. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and assessment information is used to plan work that matches pupils' abilities well. However, marking, especially in Years 1 and 2, is not consistent in making clear to pupils what the next steps are in their learning. At times, this slows pupils' progress towards their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a creative curriculum, enriched well by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs tailored to the needs of its pupils. Subjects are linked together well to give relevance to pupils' learning, especially of basic literacy and numeracy skills. These include a wide variety of practical experiences, such as drama and working with computers which, as well as developing pupils' skills, lead to high levels of enjoyment. Throughout the school, good personal, social and health education promotes the pupils' good healthy and safe living. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunity to undertake responsibility and this limits their ability to make their own choices about how to continue their learning. The additional provision for pupils with LDD is of high quality and includes, for example, using movement to develop pupils' language skills, which is also adapted to benefit all pupils. The school provides a very attractive learning environment and makes very good use of the space available to offer specialist rooms for movement, music, drama, and small group work and to give vulnerable pupils individual support. The well-equipped outdoor environment is also used well to enhance pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

From the moment children enter school, the pastoral care they receive, particularly in nurturing their personal needs, is an outstanding feature that is highly praised by parents. One parent wrote, 'My child's level of well-being is extremely high. She loves going to school and never wants to miss a day'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' well-being are very secure. Pupils with LDD receive excellent additional support, which tackles both their personal and academic needs, but especially their self-confidence. Good links with parents and outside agencies further enrich this specialist provision, and effective procedures also contribute to improving attendance. Despite the school's best efforts, too many parents fail to work with the school in supporting their children's academic learning. Pupils receive good oral academic guidance to aid their learning. However, pupils are not always given enough individual written guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has been successful in sustaining a calm community where the pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. Following reorganisation, her vision and skill in ensuring the best use of 'surplus space' to implement a good range of stimulating curricular activities which meet pupils' needs have been crucial in the school's continued development. The headteacher's partnership with the two assistant headteachers and the work of the coordinator for special educational needs are particular strengths. Governors and staff with areas of responsibility also give good support. Together they are empowered as a team to use, share and develop their expertise. This ensures that self-evaluation is based on effective monitoring, identifies the right priorities for development and is largely effective in bringing about improvement. The continuing trend of rising standards clearly demonstrates this, especially in reading and mathematics. However, success criteria noted in school improvement planning is not always focused with sufficient precision on developing pupils' particular skills. This, in the case of efforts to improve pupils' writing, for example, led to some inconsistency in implementing agreed marking strategies. Good links with parents and outside agencies are key ingredients in supporting the pupils' well-being and positive attitudes to school.

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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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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?	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

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 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

7 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Whipton Barton Infant and Nursery School, Exeter EX1 3JP

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us about the school, especially the group of pupils from Years 1 and 2 and members of the 'ECO Council'. We agree with you and with most of your parents who feel that yours is a good school. These are the main things we found:

- You are taught well and, although standards are not quite as high as those found in many schools, they show that you have made good progress. Many of you do particularly well and reach expected levels in mathematics, reading and science.
- Your behaviour and the way you work and play healthily and safely together are good and show that you have made a lot of progress in developing these skills.
- You are enthusiastic about your school, enjoy learning and are respectful to the very caring adults who look after you so well.
- Your headteacher is a good leader. She works very closely with all the staff and governors to make sure that you enjoy and benefit from a good range of learning activities. As a team, they work hard in trying to make your school even better.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do these things to help your school to become an even better school:

- Improve your handwriting, spelling and punctuation so that you can write more confidently about the interesting things you do at school.
- Make sure that teachers, especially in Years 1 and 2, show you how to improve when they mark your work.
- Encourage more of your parents to help you with your schoolwork.

If you continue to give of your best, you will help to make your school even better.

Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future.

Alex Baxter Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector