

Forches Cross Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113127
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311117
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Shears

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	233
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Paul Wisken
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Forches Avenue Barnstaple EX32 8EF
Telephone number	01271 343214
Fax number	01271 343214

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Inspection number	311117

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Forches Cross is an average sized primary school that is situated in the middle of a housing estate. It provides some extended services such as adult literacy and parenting classes and has a nursery on site. Most pupils are White British. There is a higher than average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Forches Cross is a good school. There is an overwhelming sense of a warm, close community where all pupils, staff and parents are valued and well cared for. There are outstanding relationships with external agencies which support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in making progress and equip parents with skills to help their children at home. Although children begin Nursery with very low starting points they make sound progress through the Foundation Stage. Their rate of progress increases during Years 1 to 6 resulting in standards that are average by the time pupils leave in all areas, with the exception of writing. This makes a satisfactory contribution to their economic well-being and represents good progress in their learning overall. The good leadership of the well established and respected headteacher ensures that there is a clear vision for the school. He has an effective senior management team and together they rigorously monitor the provision in the school and provide support where needed. This has resulted in an upward trend in standards. A number of effective strategies have been used to improve the standard of writing in the school, resulting in the good progress made by pupils. In particular, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress owing to the outstanding care and guidance they receive both in the classroom and in nurture groups. Teaching is becoming consistently good and there are examples of outstanding practice. Pupils' personal development has improved dramatically in recent years owing to the good care and individual attention they receive from staff. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good and the small minority who have difficulties are supported well. They are learning how to live in a caring community including sharing moral issues. Older pupils take on responsibilities including caring for the younger members and the school council supports this well. They make a positive contribution to others in different communities through raising money on their behalf. Pupils are happy in the school environment and robust procedures are in place to ensure they are kept safe both in school and when they are on trips. Parents of all pupils are welcomed into the school and supported in a variety of ways such as exploring parenting skills and helping their children to learn at home. Despite the school's efforts to improve attendance, the persistent absence by a minority of pupils continues to give the school a low attendance rate when compared with schools nationally. The good curriculum gives pupils a wide variety of experiences that support their development. They are given many first hand experiences to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and these support the development of their speaking, listening and writing skills. The school recognises the benefit of planning these opportunities in a more formal way to ensure a consistent approach to developing pupils' literacy skills in other subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to good effect in increasing the level of enjoyment for pupils, and personal, social and health education makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Although satisfactory, the provision for children in the Foundation Stage does not make full use of opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and early writing skills.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have access to an appropriate range of indoor activities that help to develop children's independence in all areas of learning. However, the Reception class has only limited access to an outdoor area. Children's skills are well below expectations for their age when they start school, especially in language and communication. Their reading skills are developed effectively

but opportunities to extend their speaking and listening skills are sometimes missed. Planning needs to be managed more effectively to ensure that all children can make better progress. Nevertheless, children's personal and social development is promoted well. Thorough individual assessment informs teachers' planning for the next steps in learning and when it leads to focused group work with adults, children's progress is good. Children are well cared for and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported appropriately. Strong relationships are formed with parents, which contribute to children's well-being and support their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across the school in English and mathematics, especially in writing.
- Improve the provision in the Foundation Stage to ensure that all pupils make good progress, especially in the development of speaking, listening and early writing skills.
- Take more rigorous action to improve attendance rates.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

After a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage, pupils move into Year 1 with skills that are well below those expected for their age. In Years 1 and 2, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress in all areas. There has been an upward trend over the last four years owing to the good management of the headteacher in his deployment of staff. By the end of Year 2, standards are below average. In Years 3 to 6, all pupils continue to make good progress. In particular, their learning accelerates in the final two years, enabling them to reach average standards by the time they leave.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

There are many strengths in the personal development of pupils. They have a good knowledge of how to keep healthy and the school council representatives on the health team report to the governing body. They adopt safe practices, such as walking rather than running in school. Their moral and social development is particularly strong; increasingly they are becoming people who have a good knowledge of the difference between right and wrong. However, they do not have enough opportunities to explore their own spiritual and cultural development. Most pupils enjoy the learning in school, although the attendance of a minority is poor. However, the school, with the support of the education welfare officer, is working hard to improve this through immediate contact when pupils are absent and certificates for good attendance. Pupils behave well, showing mutual respect for the adults and increasingly for each other. Where there are difficulties, these are resolved quickly. Pupils make a good contribution to the school. These include helping to monitor the office and library. They also contribute well to the community outside of school by raising money for charities such as Children in Need and Wear it Pink in aid of cancer research. They are developing satisfactory skills that will support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is becoming increasingly effective in improving both the progress pupils make in lessons and the standards in the school. Teachers use questions very effectively to assess pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. Giving pupils enough time to respond increases their confidence to speak and motivates them to listen carefully. Teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively and they make good progress as a result. In particular there is excellent provision for pupils in the nurture groups who not only learn well academically but also develop good personal skills that support their behaviour and attitudes. ICT is used particularly well to engage pupils in the learning process. Lessons are planned carefully, including activities which promote enjoyment. The pockets of outstanding teaching in the school ensure a high level of challenge that greatly extends and accelerates pupils' progress, although this is not consistent in every class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are receiving a wide, interesting curriculum and particularly enjoy practical subjects such as art, physical education and ICT. Pupils benefit from opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects such as science and history and these could be developed further to extend pupils' learning. Other activities such as writing the script for a school production also support the continued development of their writing skills. The curriculum is enriched by inviting people from the community to work with the pupils, for example theatre groups, musicians such as 'Drum Crazy', and willow-crafting. The curriculum is well adapted to the needs of the pupils in the nurture groups. In particular, the effective personal and social development of pupils is promoted throughout the curriculum. There is a wide range of extra-curricular clubs which pupils enjoy including gymnastics, football, tennis, dance, ICT and learning to play a musical instrument.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The overwhelming strength of the school is in its care, not just for pupils, but also for the parents and the community it serves. Whenever a need arises it is addressed as a priority. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified as early as possible and a range of support is put in place. Those with emotional or behavioural issues have individual support plans to help them to improve. The school works very productively with outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and the school nurse to support pupils effectively. Whole-school initiatives have rightly focused on specific programmes to improve pupils' literacy skills, although the school also needs to increase the range of support for numeracy. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully to ensure they make good progress and arrange extra support for those who have fallen behind. They also track individual pupils' standards to ensure that there is enough challenge in the work they are set. Pupils know their curricular targets and increasingly they are involved in self-assessment of their work. Although marking is encouraging, the school recognises the need to provide more detailed guidance to pupils on how to improve and is establishing a new system. Nevertheless, the quality of verbal feedback given to pupils is very good. Parents are also well supported through a variety of courses, including parenting skills

and how to help their children at home. These are well attended and appreciated by parents, one typically commenting, 'Please keep them coming!' The outstanding care of pupils has enabled this school to create a nurturing ethos where all pupils are encouraged and supported extremely well, enabling them to make good progress in their work and become mature, thoughtful people. Parents recognise this and are overwhelmingly positive about the academic and pastoral care that their children receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The significant improvements in recent years have been brought about through the very good strategic leadership of the headteacher who has been ably assisted by his senior management team. Together they have a clear insight into the strengths of the school and the drive to tackle the areas of development that they have correctly identified. They have created a common sense of purpose amongst the staff, who work effectively as a team and have high expectations of pupils. Pupils' literacy skills continue to be supported through a variety of initiatives and careful tracking shows that these have been successful. The school sets challenging targets above those expected and mostly achieve these. Indeed, they have demonstrated their achievements in publications to help other schools to develop. They rigorously monitor the teaching in the school, giving guidance where this is needed. The leadership and management of the school have high expectations and are demonstrating that these can be achieved, supporting the judgement that they have a good capacity to improve. Subject leaders have appropriate action plans to improve provision in their areas of responsibility although it is too early to see the impact of these. The governors demonstrate a realistic knowledge of where the school is working well and the challenges it faces. They give good support to the headteacher by working with him to make improvements. There is a need to improve provision in the Foundation Stage to ensure that pupils make better progress in their language skills. In particular the organisation of classes needs to be reviewed to ensure that summer born children are not disadvantaged.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	4
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?	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 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

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

30 November 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Forches Cross Community Primary and Nursery School, Barnstaple, EX32 8EF Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome to your good school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you about all the lovely things that happen. You told us that you feel safe and valued in school. Teachers care very much about you and want to help, both with your learning and when you feel sad. You enjoy your lessons and teachers give you interesting things to do. You know how to stay healthy and have good ideas about how to keep safe. We were impressed watching you help each other in the classroom and in the playground. You told us that your teachers make you feel important by listening to your thoughts and ideas. We have asked your teachers to help you to improve your writing in particular. To help the little children make a good start in their learning, we have asked the school to work really hard on getting them to speak clearly and listen carefully. You can help too by following the good advice your teachers give you on how to improve your work. A few of you stay away from school too much. You must try to come to school every day so that you do not miss any of your lessons. It was a real pleasure to meet you and your hard working teachers. Thank you for a very special two days. Yours sincerely Mr D Shears Lead inspector



30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Forches Cross Community Primary and Nursery
School, Barnstaple, EX32 8EF**

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome to your good school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you about all the lovely things that happen.

You told us that you feel safe and valued in school. Teachers care very much about you and want to help, both with your learning and when you feel sad. You enjoy your lessons and teachers give you interesting things to do. You know how to stay healthy and have good ideas about how to keep safe.

We were impressed watching you help each other in the classroom and in the playground. You told us that your teachers make you feel important by listening to your thoughts and ideas.

We have asked your teachers to help you to improve your writing in particular. To help the little children make a good start in their learning, we have asked the school to work really hard on getting them to speak clearly and listen carefully.

You can help too by following the good advice your teachers give you on how to improve your work. A few of you stay away from school too much. You must try to come to school every day so that you do not miss any of your lessons.

It was a real pleasure to meet you and your hard working teachers. Thank you for a very special two days.

Yours sincerely

Mr D Shears
Lead inspector