

Halwill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113151
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311126
Inspection date	1 November 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Richards
Headteacher	David Jones
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Dreybury Lane Halwill Junction Beaworthy EX21 5XH
Telephone number	01409 221476
Fax number	01409 221476

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Introduction

One Additional Inspector carried out the inspection. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and how effectively the school checks its own performance. Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, discussions, analyses of assessment data and a scrutiny of the school's working documents. Other aspects of the school were not inspected in detail.

Description of the school

In September 2007, the school moved to new accommodation on an extensive site more than a mile from the original building. It serves a rural and relatively isolated area of small village communities. Almost all pupils are White British. The number of pupils attending the school is rising significantly as families move into newly built houses in the area, but the school remains smaller than average. Standards on entry have risen in recent years and are now broadly in line with national expectations. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average but these pupils are spread unevenly across the school with more in the older age groups than the younger ones. The pupils are taught in mainly mixed year group classes. The school received the Investors in People award in 2005 and the Active Mark award in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has some good features but also some areas in need of improvement. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and this is a major strength of the school. The vision and determination of the headteacher and chair of governors has been pivotal to the acquisition of a new school building on a new site. This recent move has significantly improved many aspects of provision, including areas for physical education and access to computers, which were inadequate and are now good. The pupils really appreciate the improvements, including the extensive playgrounds and what one pupil described as 'the posh toilets'. The staff team has worked very effectively to set up the equipment so that after just eight weeks the accommodation looks purposeful and established.

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory but inconsistent. In the Foundation Stage, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. The school knows that some older pupils, during a period of turbulence, made slower progress last year, but this is now being resolved. Standards fluctuate but are usually average and sometimes above the national average by the end of Year 6, particularly in English. Standards in mathematics and science are more variable. Some pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and the school is introducing additional support for those who are at risk of underachieving.

There is a clearly structured annual programme for monitoring the school's performance and this helps the school appropriately identify the main priorities for improvement. The headteacher leads the monitoring and involves subject leaders in the process. These checking procedures have led to improvements, for example raising standards in writing. However, the school has an over-generous view of achievement and leadership, which are satisfactory rather than 'good' as judged by the school. Findings are sometimes initially reported too positively, for example the dip in standards in Year 2 this year.

Strengths within the satisfactory teaching and learning include the good relationships between teachers and pupils and the good use made of new resources during lessons. Teachers plan interesting activities that motivate their pupils. However, teachers do not always use their assessments enough to help them set work that is sufficiently matched to the wide range of abilities in their mainly mixed year-group classes. The school is developing more systematic ways of accurately recording pupils' progress and these are enabling it to track the progress of individual pupils and groups. The school also recognises that these data are not yet complete. Consequently, the process of setting end of year targets and tracking pupils' progress towards them is not rigorous enough.

The curriculum is broad with a satisfactory range of activities. Substantial time is spent on English and mathematics but the time available for other subjects in Years 3 to 6 is relatively short. Special events, such as the residential experience in Years 3 and 4, contribute to pupils saying they really enjoy school. Teachers use these visits well, for example in an art lesson, using photographs of sculptures taken during a recent visit to the Eden Project. Pupils know about looking after themselves and feel very safe on the new site with its comprehensive security systems. Almost all parents appreciate this, correctly identifying the good levels of care and support for their children. Academic guidance, including the marking of pupils' work, is satisfactory although there are not always enough helpful comments about how to improve.

Most parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. One commented, 'staff are supportive and helpful' another wrote, 'the communication between us is very good,' and others

commented on how 'approachable' the headteacher and staff are. A small minority hold the reverse view. The headteacher and governors are aware of these views and are actively seeking to strengthen the partnership between all parents and the school.

Pupils are clear about the need to eat healthily and take exercise. They talk thoughtfully about their good support of local events and national charities such as Children in Need. They approve of the suggestion by the newly elected school councillors to introduce sports equipment at break times. The positive way pupils were seen sharing and respecting this equipment is a clear indicator of their good behaviour and strong sense of personal responsibility. They are gaining a satisfactory range of skills and attitudes for the next stage of their education and adult life.

As the school expands, the headteacher and governors are extending and strengthening the structure of the leadership team in order to raise standards. There is a successful programme of professional development and the sharing of leadership responsibilities. Governors are supportive of the school but the over-generous judgements they sometimes receive limit their ability to hold the school to account. The school has made substantial progress in addressing previously identified weaknesses and its recent developments demonstrate it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision is improving with some good features. The well managed induction process enables children to settle quickly. They begin learning as soon as they arrive and make at least satisfactory progress during the year. Almost all children reach the learning goals expected for their age by the end of the year and a few exceed them. The improved facilities offered by the new building are not yet fully utilised. Planning of the curriculum is satisfactory. Direct access to secure outdoor areas enables the teacher to provide a wider range of experiences for the children, often led effectively by the teaching assistant. However, the absence of any outside protection from rain and strong sun limits this and opportunities to learn through independent play and free movement in and out are not fully developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of the growing range of performance data to track progress and set challenging targets for pupils throughout the school.
- Ensure more robust checks are conducted on the performance of all aspects of the school and findings are reported accurately and promptly to enable an incisive response to specific weaknesses.
- Help teachers provide a better match of work to the wide range of abilities of their pupils.

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

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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	3
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

6 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Halwill Community Primary School, Halwill Junction, Devon EX21 5XU

- Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed talking to groups of you, seeing some of your work and walking round your school. You were very helpful in answering my questions and keen to tell me how much you like your new school buildings. I agree with you that they are great and are making a big difference. Overall, your school is satisfactory with several things that are good. Here are some of the highlights:
- You behave well in lessons and around the school. This helps teachers to focus on what it is they want you to learn.
- You all make progress in lessons and some of you do well, especially in English.
- You told me that you like school, particularly the trips and visits, such as when you went to the Eden Project.
- The headteacher, all staff and governors have worked very hard to get your new school building and to make it look so attractive after such a short time. You are doing your bit by looking after all the new equipment well.
- You all help the very youngest children to settle in quickly and feel comfortable around the school.
- Everyone in the school takes good care of you and makes sure you are safe.
- I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on three things:
 - Use all the information from assessing your work to check how much progress you are all making and what sort of targets you should be working towards in the future.
 - Make sure that leaders carry out careful checks on the school, share what has been found and use it to make things better.
 - Help teachers to find ways of always giving you all work that is not too easy or too hard.

I know you are very proud of your new building and feel sure you will want to help everyone make it a very good school.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead inspector

6 November 2007



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