

North Molton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113163
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311131
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanna Pike

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	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Wallis
Headteacher	David Grant
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Fore Street North Molton South Molton EX36 3HL
Telephone number	01598 740343
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

North Molton is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly less than that of most schools, but slightly more pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The school has gained Healthy Schools status. Until recently, there was a local pre-school but this has closed. A before- and after-school club is managed externally and offers a range of activities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

North Molton is a satisfactory school. Standards are in line with expectations. In the 2007 national Key Stage 2 tests, results in English and mathematics were above the national average, and results in science were in line. Progress in the current Year 6 is satisfactory, although standards are not as high as in previous years, as the make-up of this cohort is different to previous ones. Standards in Year 2 over the last three years have been declining and in 2007 were significantly below average. The reason for this decline has been a change in cohorts entering the school. Attainment on entry varies, but for the current Year 2 was slightly below average, especially in communication, language and literacy. Pupils in Year 2 have made satisfactory progress, although standards remain below average. Standards in writing and mathematics are weaker than in reading, where they are broadly average.

An outstanding feature is the excellent provision for pupils' social and emotional development. Pupils really benefit from the weekly opportunities to work in mixed-age groups, and develop strong independent skills. Older pupils relish leading and organising these groups and have a very good sense of responsibility towards others and the community. Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attitudes and behaviour, and above average attendance. The good pastoral care and support which pupils receive contributes well to their good personal development and well-being. Teachers set targets for pupils in mathematics and writing, but pupils, especially in Years 1 to 4, do not have a good understanding of these targets. Neither do all pupils always know how to improve.

Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of stimulating resources to enthuse pupils. Good relationships and pupils' positive attitudes support learning well. Pupils work hard in lessons because teachers have high expectations of behaviour. However, tasks are not always sufficiently matched to pupils' needs, especially for younger pupils. This sometimes leads to a lack of challenge for middle and higher attaining pupils.

The satisfactory curriculum has appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, as well as its strengths in provision for pupils' personal development. Growing links between different subjects is increasing pupils' enjoyment and beginning to provide extra opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which all share, but the school's self-evaluation is inconsistent. The school's judgements of several aspects of its work are inaccurate. Monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough in helping to identify weaknesses and improve practice. The school is developing a more effective tracking system which is helping teachers to identify and tackle underachievement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory as a result of sound leadership and management. Standards on entry to Reception vary from year to year, from below national expectations to broadly average. The current cohort, whilst broadly in line, was weaker in their creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and skills in communication, language and literacy. Over the year, they have made satisfactory progress overall, but good progress in creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the year, most pupils will have reached expectations. Teaching is satisfactory, with good use

of questioning. Children are keen to learn and behaviour is good as a result of effective classroom management. However, tasks are not always sufficiently matched to pupils' needs and this lessens progress. An improvement since the previous inspection is the addition of an appropriate outdoor area which extends children's learning opportunities satisfactorily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across the school for all pupils, especially in writing and mathematics, and particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching by matching work more accurately to pupils' needs and helping pupils to understand better how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the school evaluates itself more rigorously so that weaker aspects of provision can be identified and addressed.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. As a result of action the school has taken, the achievement of higher attaining pupils has improved since the previous inspection. Over the last three years, more pupils have reached the higher level in mathematics and science. In 2007, more pupils than nationally gained the higher level in English. However, fewer pupils gained the expected level because a fifth of pupils were absent from the tests. Standards and achievement in writing and mathematics remain weaker than reading across the school and are quite rightly whole-school priorities. The school has begun to track pupils' progress more closely and accurately. This is having a positive impact across the school, as teachers are making increasing use of this information to tackle underachievement. For example, in the current Year 2, all pupils have made at least satisfactory progress since Year 1, and one third have made good progress. As a result of the good support they receive, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress similar to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe. They feel well supported if they are upset and, as one pupil said, 'We never feel left out.' They know they can depend on adults and express any concerns they have through the 'worry box'. Pupils have a good understanding about healthy eating and exercise; they explained 'We don't eat junk.' The numerous opportunities to contribute to the school and community are greatly appreciated by pupils and this contributes significantly to their understanding of responsibility. Some pupils are thoroughly enjoying organising mini lunchtime clubs for other pupils, and this is extending their leadership skills well. The school council gives older pupils an effective voice, but as yet, younger pupils do not play such a significant role. Pupils have good awareness of the beliefs and feelings of others. As yet, they do not have a good understanding about the diversity of cultures in Britain. Teamworking skills are well developed and pupils enjoy using their initiative. These strengths, together with their satisfactory achievement in literacy and numeracy, means they are being soundly prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are keen to contribute their ideas because teachers engender confidence and a 'can do' culture. Good opportunities for explaining their thinking, such as 'talk partners', also contribute to pupils' good speaking and listening skills. In an English lesson, pupils articulately discussed how characters in a film were feeling. However, when teachers talk too much, learning becomes passive and progress is slowed. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn and the steps they need to make in the lesson. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils in lessons and in small groups, and this results in pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities making the same progress as others. Teachers plan lessons carefully and are making growing use of assessment to revisit aspects that pupils are unsure of. Marking uses praise appropriately and the best marking gives pupils good advice on how to improve. However, this approach is not followed consistently and too many pupils do not get clear enough guidance on the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A good range of enrichment activities contribute significantly to pupils' good personal development. Pupils speak enthusiastically about residential trips, visits, visitors and clubs, and participation is high. They value the after-school club activities provided externally and these contribute to their enjoyment of school. Provision for art is a strength and art displays around the school are of a high standard. Gifted and talented pupils are soundly catered for with an increasing range of enrichment activities provided through effective links with other local schools. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, though work is not always matched accurately enough to meet pupils' needs. Although teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, individual learning plans do not always have specific enough targets.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care and support is a strength across the school and results in pupils feeling safe, secure and ready to learn. As one parent said, 'Teachers always make time to listen to worries and pupils are not made to feel a nuisance.' All staff go out of their way to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported and encouraged. Effective liaison with external agencies is well used to further support pupils when this is required. Procedures to safeguard pupils are robust and thorough. Effective procedures help children to settle in quickly whenever they join the school and, similarly, when they move on to secondary school. The quality of academic guidance is not as strong. Not all pupils know their writing and mathematics targets, or have a clear idea of how well they are doing or how to improve. This is especially the case for pupils in Years 1 to 4. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are beginning to benefit from useful information sheets telling them what they need to do for each National Curriculum level in writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has successfully created a strong team ethos for staff and pupils. The development of pupils' personal skills, especially independence, responsibility and initiative, are highly valued and seen as important in supporting pupils' all-round development. Subject leadership has been strengthened and this has improved teachers' accuracy in assessing pupils' work, which is beginning to raise standards. The school's tracking system is enabling teachers to monitor learning more closely and address underachievement. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve because current tracking is accurate and more frequent, and subject leaders are more effective. This ensures that progress is more consistent across the school. The school's strategic plan is very detailed and identifies appropriate priorities. However, the priorities do not have sufficiently clear or measurable outcomes to be able to evaluate whether they have been tackled successfully. Neither are the priorities sharply focused enough on pupils' achievement. Although the school has systems in place to evaluate its performance, these are not frequent or rigorous enough to identify weaknesses and swiftly tackle them. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and committed. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are willing to challenge. However, they have yet to fully realise their role as critical friends because they do not always receive sufficiently accurate information, neither do the subject links work as well as they could.

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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?	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	4
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Molton Primary School, North Molton EX36 3HL

It was good to come and see you at your school! Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during the school's inspection. We especially enjoyed the good discussion we had with some of you from Year 6. We learned a lot. I think you would all make very good future inspectors! Right now, your school is giving you a satisfactory education. Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:

- You work hard in lessons and make sound progress. You reach expected standards. You and your teachers are making sound efforts to improve this further.
- Your personal development is good. You really enjoy your time in school. You have good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy. Your behaviour is good and you have a very strong sense of responsibility.
- Your teachers have been busy working hard to improve things. They provide satisfactory teaching.
- Your teachers work hard to give you a satisfactory curriculum which includes the outstanding opportunities you have to work with pupils from other classes on team activities
- The school does a good job to make sure that you all feel safe, settled and secure.
- Your headteacher is doing a satisfactory job to help everyone work together and to make sensible plans with the staff and governors to improve things.

To improve further, the school should now:

- Help you to achieve even better in mathematics and writing.
- Help your teachers to make lessons even better and help you to understand how to improve your work.
- Improve the way it measures how well it is doing so that it can be even better.

Thank you again for all your help.

Joanna Pike Lead Inspector