

Shebbear Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113166
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311134
Inspection date	4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	48
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derrick Andrew
Headteacher	Sally Strange
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Shebbear Beaworthy EX21 5SG
Telephone number	01409 281220
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Shebbear is a very small, two-class school serving its local rural area. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and have English as their first language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, there were only two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) so discussion of current attainment is inappropriate. However, taking several years together, although varying significantly from year to year, attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

Over recent years, there have been significant staffing changes. The current headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2007 after one year as acting headteacher at the school. In the year since her appointment, there have been changes of staff in both classes, with a number of temporary teachers in post for varying lengths of time. Staffing is now much more stable than it has been in the recent past.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Shebbear is a satisfactory school. Due to the good, decisive leadership of the headteacher and governors, it is rapidly improving. Many aspects of the school are now good, but as many of the advances are new, there is a legacy of underachievement, particularly in writing, that is taking time to overcome. Currently, pupils are both entering and leaving the school with broadly average attainment and thus, their achievement is satisfactory overall. However, achievement differs from subject to subject. That in reading has been raised by development work and is now good, that in mathematics and science is satisfactory, while achievement in writing is barely adequate, especially amongst younger pupils in Reception and in Years 1 and 2.

The headteacher recognised the need for improvement and has worked energetically to promote better progress. Although achievement over time is broadly satisfactory, over the current term the pupils' progress has accelerated and is now good. Their books and their responses in lessons show a speed of learning that is enabling them to catch up lost ground and to forge ahead. With greater stability in staffing has come a capacity to work together to ensure good teaching and learning at all times. Teaching in lessons is consistently good and there are examples of outstanding teaching. High expectations are evident at all levels. Teachers have high expectations of themselves and they are taking on a considerable number of initiatives with enthusiasm. In turn, they hold high expectations of their pupils, who equally are trying hard to live up to these.

Pupils are helped to be happy, social young people who like school very much. They are friendly, polite and a pleasure to meet. The good individual care and attention given to them means that they feel safe and secure and valued. The curriculum, including that in Reception, is good overall. It has a strong personal dimension ensuring pupils not only know how to keep themselves healthy, safe and well, but take action to do so. Enrichment activities successfully promote pupils' enjoyment of school. They talk with enthusiasm, for example, about sporting activities, in which they take part energetically. They also show an enthusiasm for many lessons, discussing work in a mathematics lesson, for example, with obvious interest. They are not, however, as enthusiastic about writing. They report that writing 'is tiring'. This is partly a reflection of a lack of fluency and control in the way that they write, which is demonstrated by poor handwriting, and partly because they have not had sufficient practice to increase their writing stamina, for example through writing in other subjects.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school community with older pupils readily looking after younger ones and taking on day-to-day responsibilities around school. They gain understanding of their local community through, for example, talking to older local residents at a weekly lunch, as well as working with some of the younger children from the local pre-school. The headteacher and governors have rightly identified the need to expand the pupils' understanding of different cultures, and links are now being forged with a school in Zambia and one in a different context in Great Britain. This is yet, however, to have impact on the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the lives of others, which is at present limited.

The leadership and management of the headteacher and governors have been successful in ensuring that the school has emerged from the recent turbulent period feeling very positive about the future. Parents are confident about the direction the school is taking. Staffing changes have, however, meant that a very heavy burden has been placed on the headteacher and, with increasing stability, there is now a need to ensure that more of the leadership work is shared amongst other staff. Because of the success of recent developments and the good

quality of teaching and learning now evident, the school has good capacity to continue current improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children achieve satisfactorily and by the end of Reception, their attainments are broadly average. In the past, however, there has been a weakness in their attainment in developing early writing skills. Good attention has been given to developing the provision in line with national requirements. Children are given a balanced curriculum that encourages the development of independence as well as basic skills. The headteacher manages the provision well and has promoted improvement in the accommodation so that the children can have valuable experience of learning outdoors as well as in.

Recent developments mean that teaching and learning, and the curriculum, are now good, promoting the good progress of the children. Children have access to a wide range of stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors. Induction procedures are good and ensure that the children rapidly settle into school life. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that care and welfare are given high priority and as a result, children approach staff with confidence. Parents are encouraged to feel full partners in their children's education.

What the school should do to improve further

- In order to raise standards in writing, improve pupils' handwriting and give them more opportunity to practise writing throughout the curriculum.
- Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diversity of cultures in Great Britain and beyond.
- Develop the leadership skills and roles of staff other than the headteacher.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In this small school, attainment on entry varies each year but is broadly average. Standards also vary but in 2008 standards in Year 2 and Year 6 were average, particularly in mathematics. However, in writing, standards in Year 2 have been low over a number of years, although they were slightly better in Key Stage 2. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, although achievement in reading in both Key Stages is now good. In 2008, the picture was not as strong. Achievement in mathematics and science was adequate but achievement in writing was inadequate in Key Stage 1.

Currently, pupils, irrespective of their level of attainment, are now making good progress and standards are rising. An emphasis on pupils learning to use and apply what they know in both mathematics and science is paying off in both progress and pupils' interest in their work. Writing, too, is improving, but pupils are still not always writing sufficiently fluently or legibly for them to complete written work with ease.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop very positive relationships with staff. They are ready to help and support each other in class and in the playground. This helps them to be comfortable in school and to enjoy being there. This, in combination with average standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology, is preparing them in a satisfactory way for the future. Pupils show good knowledge of right and wrong and generally act upon this. Knowledge of the cultures and traditions of others is now being promoted but as yet, pupils show slim knowledge of the way of life and beliefs of others. The vast majority of pupils behave very well. There are, however, a small number who have more difficulty with self-control who other pupils say occasionally cause them a problem. The school is working hard to help these pupils to improve, with a good degree of success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use a wide mix of strategies for teaching the pupils, including good use of discussion between pupils as well as with the teacher. The mix of practical, first-hand experience with careful explanations promotes learning as well as enthusing pupils. Teachers use assessment well to identify the next steps for pupils and are consciously holding high expectations to ensure that the oldest and highest attaining pupils in the class are challenged. These high expectations do mean that occasionally younger pupils in the mixed-age classes are a little 'lost' during the whole class part of lessons. Activities that follow, however, are well matched to their needs and this ensures they gain from the lesson as a whole.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned so that skills are built securely on previous work. It is well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. There is good emphasis on developing pupils personally, for example promoting healthy eating by the growing, cooking and eating of vegetables. There are many visits, visitors and after-school clubs that help to enrich the curriculum and extend the pupils' experiences. The school has begun to consider ways in which they can be given more practice in writing through the planning of opportunities for writing in other subjects, but it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils are at the heart of all the school does. Individuals are supported and guided well. Great attention is given to the all-round development of each child and each is enabled to learn in a safe, supportive community.. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. Pupils with additional difficulties, be they educational, physical or social, are fully included and every effort is made to ensure that they gain from all the school offers. The process of setting targets and opportunities for each pupil to discuss their work with their teacher mean that each is sure of what they should do to improve and has the confidence to do so.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School self-evaluation and improvement work has been securely and accurately promoted. The headteacher's focus on raising achievement and enhancing pupils' personal development is very positively reflected in improved teaching and progress. The tracking of pupils supports full inclusion and enables the school to set challenging targets for the pupils. Other staff are now contributing more to the leadership of the school, but the staff changes mean that this is not fully established and consequently, the headteacher has a heavy workload. Governors are well informed and supportive and have played a strong part in ensuring that the school continues to improve. Parents are highly supportive of the school and consider it is doing well by their children.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

5 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Shebbear Community School, Shebbear, EX21 5SG

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you for your warm and friendly welcome when we came to inspect your school. Your school is a satisfactory one at the moment, but the hard work of your headteacher, teachers, helpers and governors is helping it get better very quickly. We think that your hard work is helping with this, too. We were pleased to see that you know how to keep fit by getting lots of exercise and eating healthily. It was also good to hear that you feel safe and well looked after. We were both impressed by your enthusiasm for school.

This is what we liked most about your school:

- The good progress you are now making in learning to read, write and do maths.
- The teachers' high expectations of how much you can learn and the way you try hard to live up to them.
- The way that teachers choose a variety of activities so that you are kept interested in lessons.
- The opportunities you have to learn to keep yourselves safe and healthy.
- The energy that everyone, including you, is putting into ensuring that you learn well and make progress.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you improve your handwriting so that you don't find it so difficult and can write more easily in lots of different lessons.
- Help you to know more about the cultures and traditions of people living in Great Britain and beyond.
- Share some of the jobs that the headteacher is doing with some of the other staff.

We are very glad that you like your school and think you are right to do so. We think that you could help your teachers to make your school even better by working really hard with your writing.

Yours faithfully

Rowena Onions Lead inspector