

Woolsery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113176
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311138
Inspection date	15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Gardner
Headteacher	Matthew Cole
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2002
School address	Woolsery Bideford EX39 5QS
Telephone number	01237 431307
Fax number	01237 431652

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woolsey is smaller than the average primary school and most classes cater for two year groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average and most pupils are White British. A new headteacher started at the school in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woolsey School provides a satisfactory standard of education. The new headteacher has clearly identified what needs improvement and how to make the required changes. Parents are happy about recent changes like better communication with parents. One wrote, 'The school just seems to have come alive with enthusiasm ... the children and staff seem to be buzzing.'

Children enter the Foundation Stage with the expected levels of skills. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. The achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Classrooms are positive learning environments and pupils respond well to their teachers. However, the school has only just started to gather good quality assessment information, so currently cannot ensure that teaching meets the full range of learners' needs. The curriculum is satisfactory and covers all the areas that it should but is inflexible. This means that opportunities are missed for pupils to use and apply their developing skills in areas such as information and communication technology (ICT). There is also too little reference to multicultural issues. Recent sweeping improvements to ICT provision have ensured that most aspects of the subject can now be taught. Pupils enjoy the good variety of after school clubs and societies and attend regularly.

Adults at the school know and care for their charges well but pupils have only limited awareness of their standards of work or how to improve them. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well and love their school and life at Woolsey. They know about how to stay healthy and safe. They make satisfactory contributions to the community and are keen, as is the school, to do more in this area. Their development of skills to help them in the future is satisfactory but lags behind in ICT.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving and being strengthened by the new headteacher's swift and accurate analysis of what needs to be done. He has energetically set about school improvement, although the outcomes of the many changes under way are not yet fully evident. Helped by fellow staff and governors, the headteacher's analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses has been used in producing clear, viable plans for the future. Governors back these developments fully and are now better empowered both to support and challenge the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage make generally satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Their personal development is particularly good as they learn to make choices, work with others and concentrate on tasks. They enjoy being at school and answer enthusiastically. Teaching is well matched to their abilities and interests. The curriculum is satisfactory, although the lack of cover on the outdoor play area restricts physical activity on wet days.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and quantity of assessment information to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, receive the correct degree of support and challenge.
- Ensure that pupils are aware of the standards of their work and what they should do to improve.

- Develop greater flexibility in the curriculum to provide a more stimulating range of activities and extend pupils' skills, particularly in ICT.
- Provide more opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural society.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter and leave the Foundation Stage with the expected level of skills. They make a sound start to their schooling and leave the Reception Year well prepared for their next stage of education.

The good learning habits established in the early years stand pupils in good stead in Years 1 to 6. Pupils continue to make steady progress in these year groups. While attainment fluctuates a little each year because of the small numbers involved, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. Pupils' achievement, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is average.

Fewer than expected pupils reach high standards in national assessments because some teaching lacks challenge, notably in English and mathematics. This was not the case in the Year 6 science assessment in 2007, where half of the pupils gained the higher Level 5 and standards were above average.

Until recently, the school had very few computers and so standards in ICT are too low. The school has acted vigorously to address this concern. Long-term target setting for year groups has not been challenging enough in the past, because assessment has not given the school a clear enough picture of pupils' academic potential. It has improved now.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils greatly enjoy school life and their attendance is good. They behave sensibly and are invariably polite. They volunteer for jobs and are willing to help the school in lots of ways, but are less involved in the local area although links with village organisations are currently being forged. The school council is developing and becoming more active in making decisions about, for example, playground equipment. Pupils generally feel safe in school and are aware of how to avoid dangerous situations out of school.

Pupils know which foods constitute a healthy diet and are involved in many sporting activities, including daily exercise sessions. Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy but their ICT skills are below the expected standards.

Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and, as they move up the school, they become proficient in discussing situations where the correct choices are not obvious. Social skills are good, with older pupils developing effective leadership and teamwork skills and learning to cooperate with others. Pupils have opportunities to study aspects of local life, but they do not have enough opportunities to learn about other cultures and religions in any depth or to discuss issues like racial equality

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers usually plan well so most pupils have appropriate work and teaching assistants can contribute effectively. When this happens, pupils learn easily because they have something they can tackle and someone to turn to if they are stuck. Occasionally the organisation leaves one or more groups unsupervised, and at these times pupils can become distracted. In mixed age classes, work and questions are often targeted at a specific year group to ensure that they cover the correct curriculum. Lesson endings are effective in recapitulating what pupils have learned, important vocabulary and key ideas.

Some teaching is insufficiently challenging, particularly for more able pupils, who may not be given new goals once they have achieved the ones set for the class. Work is always corrected, but marking rarely helps pupils understand how they can do better next time. Because the school does not collect regular assessment information and accurately track pupils' rates of progress, teachers are not always able to spot those who would benefit from help in specific areas quickly enough and this slows their achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets requirements. All subjects are planned for and the school is in the process of developing its links with other schools and introducing modern foreign languages for older pupils. The current organisation and timetable are too inflexible to allow greater creativity in, for example, teaching important skills like literacy across a variety of subjects. This means that some lessons can be uninteresting. Opportunities are missed to promote pupils' awareness of our culturally diverse society in subjects such as history.

There are good opportunities for pupils to keep fit. The wide range of clubs and societies is very popular and has a strong, although not exclusive, focus on physical activities. The small range of visits on offer is being widened and a variety of visitors enlivens pupils' experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know pupils and their families well and teachers regularly encourage pupils and celebrate their achievements, for instance in assemblies. Child protection procedures are secure. Several other safeguarding procedures were implemented recently and now meet requirements. New measures to improve attendance by rapidly contacting home are already having a strong impact. The school is beginning to ask for parental and pupil views in a more formal way through using questionnaires rather than the conversation at the school gate, and parents appreciate this.

The school has begun to set class targets for pupils in English and mathematics but few pupils are aware of what they are. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the school brings in other agencies to help when necessary.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has quickly and accurately analysed the school's strengths and weaknesses. Working with staff and governors, he has used this good self-evaluation to develop a vision for the school and produce a new improvement plan. This prioritises precisely what the school must do to raise standards. The implementation of the recommendations is already under way and some positive developments are seen. For example, there is now has a large bank of laptop computers which teachers regularly use in lessons. Pupils and teachers are already developing increased confidence in using ICT as a tool for learning. As with other reforms, it is too soon to observe measurable improvements in standards.

Partnerships with the on-site Nursery and other local schools greatly benefit pupils' transition into and out of the school. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and its capacity for improvement in the future, based on its track record, is satisfactory.

The change from centralised leadership to more devolved responsibilities has just started. Newly empowered staff are 'feeling their way' and just starting to monitor the areas for which they are responsible. They do not yet line manage other staff. Teaching assistants afford good support in lessons, but are not always deployed where they are most needed, so do not use their skills fully.

The changes to school leadership have galvanised the governing body. Governors are improving their skills and are better organised to monitor the school. They are gaining better insights into the school's strengths and weaknesses and are in a position to support and challenge as appropriate.

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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 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	3
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?	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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woolsey School, Woolsey, EX39 5QS

Many thanks for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited the school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and thought you were very polite.

Woolsey School provides a reasonable education and we believe that it is changing for the better. The standard of your work is about average and your progress is satisfactory. You told us how much you like school and we were pleased that you get on so well with one another and your teachers. Your personal development is good. The school looks after you well but needs to explain to you more clearly how well you are doing. Teaching is satisfactory and the range of subjects you study is sound but could also be improved.

The new headteacher is making a difference to the school and beginning to improve things. He is getting good back-up from other teachers and governors. There are a number of things that need to improve. These are:

- The school should check up on your work better so it can give all of you the help you need to learn.
- You need clear advice on how good your work is and how to improve on it.
- The school should organise what you study better to help make lessons more interesting and use computers more.
- You need to learn more about different cultures in Britain.

Once again, many thanks for your help during the inspection.

With all good wishes for the future.

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector