

Decoy Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113209
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311156
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rod Peers
Headteacher	Len Peach
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Deer Park Road Newton Abbot TQ12 1DH
Telephone number	01626 353282
Fax number	01626 336558

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the pupils' achievement; the combined effect of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' learning and attitudes; the impact of accommodation on provision, especially in the Foundation Stage; and the quality and impact of school self-evaluation and development. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons; scrutiny of pupils' work; discussions with them, the staff and a governor; and a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This large school is popular and as numbers in the local area reduce, it is taking an increasing number of pupils from further afield. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and most speak English as their first language. There are no pupils at early stages of English language development. A below-average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school has changed over the last three years. Previously it was broadly average but it is now a little below average. The school has been awarded the Becta ICT Mark, Eco and Healthy School awards, the Devon Active Schools award and a platinum award for its travel plan.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Decoy is an outstandingly effective school. From an average starting point when they joined the school, Year 6 pupils have achieved extremely well. As a result, standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make strong progress over their time in school. The current Year 6 pupils, for example, made the progress expected over the four years of Key Stage 2 by the end of Year 5. Parental opinion of the school is overwhelmingly positive. The key to its success is summed up by one parent who said, 'The children are at the heart of all that the school does.' Relationships in class and throughout the school are highly productive. This stems directly from the excellent leadership of the headteacher, who, despite the size of the school, ensures that every pupil is individually known and valued. Despite its high standards and the accolades and accreditations it has received, the school is not complacent. Two years ago, senior staff took a bold step in redesigning and transforming the curriculum into a vibrant and cohesive programme that inspires pupils to want to learn. Subjects are linked together so that the skills and knowledge pupils are learning have meaning and relevance for them. This was evident as pupils in Year 2 talked enthusiastically about their work with a visiting storyteller. This had given real meaning to their knowledge of what life in London might have felt like at the time of the Plague and Great Fire. Stimulating experiences, for example, in drama and in making models of Tudor houses, had inspired them to work hard and to remember what they had learned. A marked effect of the curriculum is the enthusiasm that pupils of all ages have for their work. As one said, 'What we do is fun. You never know what is going to happen.' Teachers often link first-hand experiences in subjects such as history and science to writing. This gives pupils a desire to write for a range of purposes and audiences. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make excellent progress in learning to present their written work in a variety of forms. By the end of Year 6, their skills in writing are exceptionally good. Lower down the school, Year 1 and 2 pupils make good progress in writing but do not do quite as well in this area as they do in reading and mathematics. Pupils' enthusiasm enables lessons to be conducted at a brisk pace. The amount and quality of work that pupils complete is evident in their books and in high quality classroom displays. Alongside the creative aspects of the curriculum, teachers ensure that pupils have regular practice in basic skills such as phonics and mental arithmetic. The school accommodation, with small classrooms and restricted hall space, presents a particular challenge. Excellent relationships, combined with the organisational skills of school leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, ensure this potential barrier has little impact on pupils' learning. The staff and governors have drawn up plans for substantial improvement of the accommodation and these are currently the subject of local authority consideration. High quality pupil management and the lively approach of teachers ensure that pupils behave well and become engaging and self-reliant young people. They take an active part in running, developing and improving the school. Pupils also played a key part in formulating a bid for lottery funding to enable a local cycleway to be built. Pupils are very well aware of the importance of keeping safe and well. The school ensures that each takes plenty of exercise through, for example, a daily ten-minute exercise programme. Adults show a high degree of respect for their pupils and pupils in turn respect adults and each other. Through their class work, as well as through direct links with schools in France and Kenya, pupils gain strong understanding of themselves as world citizens. The school is a self-evaluating community. Pupils are encouraged to look critically at their work. Strategies such as individual targets in writing help them to do this effectively. They appreciate the support that they are given to help them to succeed. As one explained, 'I like the writing ladder, it is a good reminder of what I sometimes forget.' The

performance of each pupil is regularly reviewed and effective interventions planned for those who do not make expected progress. Through this process, leaders have good knowledge of the overall performance of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very successfully supported and achieve well. Everyone works together to the benefit of the pupils. The work of all staff is valued and their opinion sought. For example, a recent review of the work of teaching assistants, enabled them to discuss how they could be used more effectively. This has had an impact on the way pupils are supported and led to improvements in internal communication systems that are of benefit to all staff. Teachers and leaders are very productively self-critical. Despite the strong performance of Year 6 pupils in mathematics, the leadership team identified a need to strengthen the pupils' underlying understanding of how to calculate. Well-thought-out improvement work is already underway to address this. This honest self-evaluation, and the successful action taken to enhance performance wherever possible, ensures that the school is extremely well placed to maintain and improve its excellent work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Nursery from a range of backgrounds, with a significant number having little experience of working and playing alongside others. They make rapid progress in gaining skills, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Their attainment by the end of Reception in all areas of learning is a little above expectations. Teachers provide the children with a very wide range of first-hand experiences that engrosses them and ensures that they love school. There is a good amount of supervised outdoor activity but the accommodation restricts the opportunities the children have for working independently outdoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress that Year 1 and 2 pupils make in learning to write.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 Children, Inspection of Decoy Primary School, Newton Abbott, Devon TQ12 1DH I really enjoyed my day at Decoy and would like to thank you for your help and friendly conversations. I know you will be pleased to know that I think yours is an exceptionally good school. This is what I liked most about your school.
- The way you all get on so well together and enjoy your time in school.
- You and your teachers work really hard so you make fast progress and do very well.
- There is a fantastic range of exciting and interesting activities provided for you by your teachers and helpers.
- Your school tries to help every single one of you to do the best that he or she can.
- Everyone in your school wants to make it better and better. I also think your headteacher deserves a big pat on the back for making the school as good as it is. To make things even better, this is what I have asked your school to do now.
- See what more your teachers can do to help the pupils in Years 1 and 2 to write even better. Once again, thank you. I know that you will all continue to try hard with your writing and that you will carry on helping all the grown-ups to make sure Decoy Primary School continues to be a happy, thriving place. Best wishes, Rowena Onions Lead inspector

30 November 2007

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- Your school tries to help every single one of you to do the best that he or she can.
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I also think your headteacher deserves a big pat on the back for making the school as good as it is.

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

- See what more your teachers can do to help the pupils in Years 1 and 2 to write even better.

Once again, thank you. I know that you will all continue to try hard with your writing and that you will carry on helping all the grown-ups to make sure Decoy Primary School continues to be a happy, thriving place.

Best wishes,

Rowena Onions
Lead inspector