

# Starcross Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113219
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	311161
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Townsend HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Simon Broom
<b>Headteacher</b>	Iannis Ireland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	New Road Exeter EX6 8QD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 890454
<b>Fax number</b>	01626 891663

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Starcross is a smaller-than-average primary school. There is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment of children at entry to the Reception Year is broadly average. The number of pupils who join the school other than at the normal time is above average. The school has recently experienced a difficult period of transition, following the untimely death of the previous headteacher in 2005. The current headteacher was appointed in April 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Starcross Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is improving because good leadership and management by the headteacher, aided by the committed senior team and governors, have enabled the school to recover well from a recent period of upheaval. Recent initiatives, especially the improved tracking of pupils' progress, have had a positive impact. Standards are rising and are now average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Results for higher achievers improved markedly in 2007. However, pupil achievement, whilst now satisfactory, is still variable across Years 3 to 5. Senior leaders are working hard to improve the progress made by pupils, although there is work still to do to meet the school's raised aspirations.

The school enjoys a good partnership with parents and carers, who overwhelmingly support the school. Good links exist with local community groups and the pre-school. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is now above average. Pupils behave considerately and are welcoming and positive. They enjoy their education and most of them work hard in lessons. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The staff take good care of the pupils and there are robust systems to ensure they are safeguarded well. The academic guidance pupils receive is satisfactory. Some marking offers advice as well as praise but pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work because learning targets are not regularly shared with them and their parents and carers.

The headteacher has reorganised the senior leadership team. Senior leaders have an emerging picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have made improvements to the system for checking and evaluating the quality of education and the rate of pupils' progress. However, this system is not robust enough to identify pockets of underachievement and middle leaders have an imprecise understanding of performance in their subjects.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory but the pace of learning and level of challenge in the work given to pupils is not consistent, especially in the older classes. However, the early identification and subsequent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective. Leaders have secured the necessary improvements since the last inspection. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory and the school has the necessary capacity to continue and accelerate its improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children settle into school very quickly because of the care and support the school organises and provides. Induction is strong, with weekly visits in the term before children begin school full-time. Thorough assessment on entry to school promotes the early identification of each individual's learning needs. The quality of teaching, the curriculum and learning resources are good, and this enables the children to make good progress in all aspects of their learning. Outdoor provision is good. The large canopy gives access in all weathers and offers additional opportunities to develop children's creative and physical skills. There is an appropriate balance of adult- and child-initiated activities. The teacher promotes early reading well through the daily phonics lesson and reading books are sent home regularly as soon as children start school, involving parents in learning. Children enjoy school and stay safe and healthy. The children enter the Foundation Stage with levels of knowledge and skills that are in line with those of

most four-year-olds. They make good progress. Most reach the levels expected of them by the time they start Year 1 and a good proportion of children exceed them.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the pace, challenge and match of work to pupils' abilities, especially in the older classes.
- Set and share with pupils targets to help them know how to improve their work so that they move forward in their learning more rapidly.
- Ensure all leaders analyse information about pupil progress and teaching and learning more precisely to sharpen improvement planning

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 their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

In the past eighteen months, pupils' achievement has markedly improved. In 2006, several factors affected pupils' achievement. The school's recent upheaval, coupled with the fact that both Year 2 and 6 had higher numbers of pupils with significant learning needs and higher mobility, had an adverse impact on standards. In 2007, standards rose across the school because there is now more rigorous tracking of all pupils' progress and there have been improvements to the quality of teaching. The school has raised pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 effectively. In 2007, test results showed standards at the end of Year 2 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, those learners capable of the higher levels in writing did less well. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science. The number of pupils achieving the higher levels in each subject in the 2007 statutory tests improved markedly. Achievement in Years 3 to 5, although improved, is more variable. There is inconsistency in the pace and challenge of work, which slows achievement. Now that tracking systems have improved, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils who join the school part-way through their primary education make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' positive approach to learning, considerate behaviour and good attendance are a tribute to the efforts of the staff and school community. Pupils are aware of and act on their understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Starcross Primary is rightly proud of its Devon Healthy School status. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe because, as one learner in Year 6 said, 'There is always an adult or a friend to turn to'. Pupils report enjoying school and feel enthusiastic about learning. There is a good 'community spirit' and pupils are active fundraisers for local causes. The weekly 'current affairs' forum is a powerful vehicle through which pupils thoughtfully debate complex real-life issues. This makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' confidence, thinking and social skills that are important to their future economic well-being. However, literacy and numeracy skill levels are not as high as they should be. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on important themes through the effective use of music and drama in well-planned assemblies and in class discussions. Behaviour is mostly good, although occasional misbehaviour from a few pupils means they lose concentration in lessons. Racist

and bullying incidents are very rare. Pupils play together well; they maintain good friendships and relationships are positive.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is improving and expectations are rising. The good use of interactive whiteboards is enhancing pupils' learning. Teaching assistants provide good additional support. Teaching is typically satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 as there is more variation in its quality. Not all teachers set a good pace to learning, which in turn affects the work rate of some learners. At times, the level of challenge could be higher. Assessments are not always used to plan tasks that are matched closely enough to the needs of average and especially the more able learners. Those pupils with additional learning needs have work well matched to their needs based on a good diagnosis of them.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is planned satisfactorily to meet the range of pupils' abilities, although on occasion the needs of middle ability and more-able pupils are not met fully. For some learners, the time available in the school day is not sufficiently productive because the timetabling of subjects is somewhat disjointed. Opportunities are then lost for pupils to apply new learning in a subject to related tasks because they are asked to move on to another subject instead. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The curriculum is enriched by the many visits and visitors to the school. Good partnerships with the local community enhance learning opportunities. For example, a local farmer brought his tractor to school and talked to the pupils to help bring alive the school's exploration of harvest time. Pupils enjoy the after-school clubs and they are well attended. There are good opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as when Year 6 pupils lead 'huff and puff' activities in the playground for the younger children and help manage the school office. The school is improving the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and all learners enjoy regular access to the computer suite. Music and the arts, as well as a wide range of sports activities, support pupils' good personal development.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Procedures to safeguard pupils are well organised and effective, as are the arrangements for pastoral care. There is a high level of commitment from the staff to raising pupils' self-esteem and promoting health and safety. There is early identification of learners at risk of underachieving and effective strategies are organised to support them in their learning. This practice is well regarded by other schools and external agencies. There are good, supportive relationships with parents, who value their partnership with the school, particularly in meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The academic guidance pupils receive is satisfactory. Pupils have too few opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Teachers' marking varies in quality. Pupils do not always get clear advice about how to improve their work, especially as teachers do not share learning targets with all pupils.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher has shown determined leadership in moving the school forward following a difficult period. He has united staff around a clear agenda for raising standards. The staff readily respond to the views of parents and pupils, which accounts for their good levels of satisfaction with the school. A largely accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses formed the basis for actions taken which have secured improvements in the quality of provision during the last year. Governors are supportive of the work of the school and of the headteacher, and provide satisfactory challenge. Monitoring of the progress made by individual pupils is now more systematic. However, at present, senior leaders are not using it to identify trends in performance of particular groups and inform target setting. Meanwhile, middle leaders are not all evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects. This slows the school's ability to identify the necessary action to bring more rapid improvement.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

11 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Starcross Primary, Starcross, Devon EX6 8QD

We very much enjoyed meeting with you during our recent two days in school. You made us feel very welcome and we liked getting the chance to talk with you about life in school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

There are some good things about your school and some areas that need to improve further.

- You enjoy school because there are many things to do during and after school, including sport, music and the arts.
- Children in the Reception class make a good start in the school.
- You work well to keep yourselves fit and healthy, for example, by taking part in the 'huff and puff' activities.
- Your parents are pleased with how well you are doing and your teachers and the school works closely with them.
- The teachers and other adults work hard to take care of you and to make your lessons interesting.
- You are polite and behaviour is mostly good, although sometimes a few of you lose concentration and act less sensibly.

Here are some things we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do.

- Make sure you are all working at a good pace and to your full potential.
- Share targets with you about how to improve your work.
- Carry out further checks on how well you are making progress in each subject to help you enjoy and achieve even more.

You can help too by making sure you know your targets and doing your very best to achieve them.

We wish you all the best for the future.

David Townsend HMI

**Annex B**



11 October 2007

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