

Homelands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113231
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	311165
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Edwina Rigby
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Westhill Road Torquay TQ1 4NT
Telephone number	01803 328264
Fax number	01803 325244

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school with a nursery, which children attend for either the morning or afternoon sessions. Children start school with standards that are below expectations for three- and four-year-olds. The school is popular and has been oversubscribed for the last five years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. At the heart of the school's success are very strong and effective leadership and management. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school. Self-evaluation is accurate, analytical and rigorous. The school's good capacity for further improvement is demonstrated clearly in the way it has successfully raised standards and achievement in mathematics and science in Year 6 over the last three years. The headteacher receives excellent support from her colleagues, especially subject leaders. The high quality governing body fulfils its role as a critical friend and in holding the school to account for the standards it achieves in an outstanding way.

The success of the school is further underpinned by effective teaching linked to an exciting and vibrant curriculum. Teachers' planning is good and they make very good use of assessment of pupils' learning to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The use of targets with pupils has been particularly effective in raising standards and achievement in mathematics and science. Classrooms are exciting and well resourced learning environments that motivate and inspire pupils. Pupils' work is celebrated through high quality displays in classrooms and around the school.

As a result of the aforementioned successes, pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Good provision in the Foundation Stage means that children make good progress from day one in school. This is particularly valued by parents. As one wrote, 'My son has made excellent progress with learning and using words and letters, in a matter of a few weeks.' This good progress continues as pupils move up through the school. The school has correctly identified a trend whereby boys outperform girls, which goes against the national trend. Whilst girls perform as well as girls nationally, boys do significantly better. Evidence from the inspection indicates that girls, especially the quiet passive ones, are not sufficiently engaged in question and answer sessions. There are times when there is insufficient flexibility in the use of teaching assistants to support their needs, particularly during lesson introductions. Similarly, there are occasions when more able pupils spend too much time sitting and listening and/or complete practice exercises, rather than being challenged through investigations and independent learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because pastoral care is of such a high standard. The school's links with its stakeholders are excellent. Parents are consulted regularly about their children's progress and their views are sought and valued over many issues. Equally, the school values pupils' views. The recent introduction of laptop computers into classrooms is a direct result of a request from pupils. As with all spending decisions, it had to pass rigorous scrutiny by governors to ensure that best value was achieved.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour is excellent. Peer mediators play an important role in supporting and resolving issues amongst fellow pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school cares for its pupils exceptionally well and makes very good use of outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. The governors' recent decision to provide full-time support for them highlights the school's commitment to caring for its pupils.

The essence of the school's success is summed up in a nutshell by a parent who commented, 'Homelands is a lovely school with wonderful teachers and children.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to school life because the provision in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is good. Children start Nursery with standards that are below those expected for this age group. They achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes and attain the expected levels by the time they are ready to start Year 1.

Home visits and a gradual introduction into school life ensure that children settle into school quickly and happily. The close relationships established between home and school, which are highly valued by teaching staff and parents and carers, are a key strength of the provision. All adults involved in the Foundation Stage have a good understanding of the specific needs of these young children. They know that they learn best when actively involved. Consequently, interesting activities are carefully planned and resources well chosen. This ensures that the children are fully engaged in their learning. For example, bad weather is not used as an excuse for staying indoors because all adults and children are equipped with waterproof clothing and footwear. This made digging for buried treasure in the rain even more realistic! Basic skills are taught very well because there is a good balance between adult input and reinforcement through play.

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are extremely enthusiastic about school life and behave very well. They develop social skills well through role-play activities, quickly learning how to take turns and listening to each other. Children soon learn to recognise healthy foods at snack times and this time is used well by teaching staff to develop their counting skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce a greater range of strategies and flexibility in teaching to support girls' learning, especially those who tend to be quiet and passive.
- Ensure that more able pupils are given more opportunities to use and apply key skills in investigative work and independent learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Over the last three years, pupils have made significant strides forward in mathematics and science, especially those achieving the higher Level 5 in national tests. Boys continue to outperform girls, although the school is aware of this and is exploring ways to ensure girls achieve as well as boys. Girls do not always make sufficient contributions to question and answer sessions in lessons. From displays of work, there is clear evidence to show that pupils achieve good standards in history, art and design, and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils in Year 3 have a good understanding of life in ancient Egypt. Pupils make good use of their key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 make good use of the Internet to carry out research into the life of King Henry VIII.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as measured against the targets in their individual education plans. They receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because pastoral care is of such a high standard. Very good moral and social development is demonstrated through the way pupils work together amicably, have a well developed sense of fair play and behave exceptionally well. Pupils have huge enthusiasm for school and unanimously agree, 'It is an enjoyable place to be.' They feel safe because they know that the adults in school listen to their worries and are confident that the school council raises any of their concerns and suggestions. Pupils are safety conscious and show considerable concern for the welfare of others. They understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise, enjoying fruit and vegetables at break time and taking part in a wide range of physical activities. Pupils respond well when given responsibility, for example, acting as a playground buddy or a peer mediator. They support the local and wider community through a good range of charity events. They are well prepared for their future because they work well together and have good literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their lessons because, as they say, 'Teachers make learning fun.' Teachers plan lessons well, with good evidence to show that they assess learning in previous lessons, and where necessary amend their planning accordingly. Teachers share the learning objective with pupils at the start of lessons and check pupils' understanding as to how well they have done at the end. Marking is good and valued by pupils. As one said, 'Teachers help us to improve and they always tell the truth about our work.' Teachers use class and individual targets particularly well to motivate pupils. Again, one said, 'I value the personal touch from my teacher at my own level.' At times, teachers are not sufficiently flexible in amending lessons to ensure that all girls participate, especially in whole-class discussions. Equally, there are occasions when more able pupils are given insufficient scope and challenge to pursue their own lines of enquiry through investigations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Classrooms are stimulating and exciting places where pupils want to learn. Pupils value the good resources available to them, especially the new laptop computers. The school has been very successful in creating a curriculum that appeals to boys. As a result, boys achieve exceptionally well. At times, the curriculum is not sufficiently appealing to some girls. Pupils have good opportunities to use key skills in other subjects. They value educational visits and enjoy participating in these. The school provides a good range of after-school clubs, including sports, music, cookery and training for peer mediators. When asked how they would improve the school, pupils responded by saying that they would like more art and PE lessons. These choices reflect their enjoyment of the school's curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The expectations of staff for the behaviour and development of the pupils are set very high. The pupils know this and respond accordingly by always trying their best. Through continual and rigorous monitoring, staff have a very keen awareness of the needs of all individuals and ensure that pupils receive positive encouragement. Assessment systems are rigorous and information is used very effectively to devise appropriately challenging targets and provide suitable support to help pupils to improve their work. The school maintains all necessary procedures to ensure the continuing health and safety of its pupils in a highly efficient manner.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is committed totally to providing the best possible education for her pupils. Together with the senior leadership team, she is reflective and analytical in evaluating the school's performance. Commitment to school improvement, especially in standards and achievement, is absolute. Areas for improvement are identified quickly and acted upon. The improvement in mathematics and science is testimony to this. Subject leaders know strengths and areas for improvement because they have effective monitoring systems. Their action plans are good and aimed at raising standards and achievement. However, the school is fully aware that the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage does not have a sufficiently high profile.

The governing body is very effective. It is particularly strong at challenging the school to justify spending plans to ensure best value for money. It holds the school to account for the standards it achieves. It is well aware of issues for improvement, especially raising the achievement of girls. Governors work effectively with the school in involving parents and pupils in all aspects of its day-to-day life.

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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?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	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?	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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Homelands Primary School, Torquay TQ1 4NT

Thank you very much for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. I would like to thank the school council and the groups of peer mediators and Year 6 pupils who gave up part of their breaks to meet with us. I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school which has some outstanding features. I think you and your parents actually know that already.

There are many good things about your school, too many to mention, but these are the most important ones:

- You make good progress in school and reach standards that are often better than those of other children of your age, especially the boys.
- You enjoy school and behave very well in lessons and around the school.
- You like your lessons and the way teachers mark your work so that you understand how you can improve it.
- You enjoy being able to use your writing and ICT skills in subjects such as history.
- All the adults look after you very well in school.
- Those who lead and manage your school, including governors, work hard to give you a really good education.

To make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to:

- look at ways to encourage girls in particular to be more involved in class discussions and question and answer sessions
- make sure that, when you are confident with a subject, you can plan your own learning and carry out more investigations.

Keep up the good work and girls, show those boys that you can do as well as them!

Yours sincerely

David Curtis Lead inspector



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David Curtis
Lead inspector