

Lydford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113257
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311181
Inspection date	7 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Poppy Arnold
Headteacher	Linda Wells
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	School Road Lydford Okehampton EX20 4AU
Telephone number	01822 820264
Fax number	01822 820510

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	7 July 2008
Inspection number	311181

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average, although the number of pupils has risen recently. Pupils come from the small village of Lydford and surrounding hamlets and farms in a very rural area within the Dartmoor National Park. The school has two classes. Children in the Foundation Stage are taught in a class alongside the pupils in Years 1 and 2. The pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are taught together in the other class. Almost all the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. There has been a significant turnover of teaching staff in the last two years, including the appointment of the headteacher, who is also serving as acting headteacher of a neighbouring school for this year only.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school serves its community well. It has many good features and few aspects that need to improve. Pupils achieve well. The pupils' personal development and well-being are strong and their caring attitudes towards one another are particularly good. They love the school and are very proud of it. Parents appreciate its many qualities, with unanimous approval in the replies received about almost all aspects of its work. One reflected similar comments received by writing, 'My child has flourished at the school.' Another commented, 'What it lacks in size and options it makes up for with enthusiasm, commitment and care.' The headteacher has established effective systems for checking the performance of the school and uses the information gained to identify precisely what is working well and what needs to improve. The school has an accurate view of its performance, has improved significantly in recent times and is well placed to improve further.

The attainment of children on entry to the school fluctuates from year to year with the very small numbers. Nevertheless, attainment on entry overall is broadly as expected nationally. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. This good progress is maintained throughout the school. Standards are rising and are above average by the time pupils leave.

Good progress is a direct result of the good teaching and learning in both classes. Teachers are acutely aware of the wide range of abilities in their classes and frequently adapt activities to suit the learning needs of several different groups. Although they talk to pupils about their work, they do not consistently provide sufficient feedback when marking it, to clarify exactly what the pupils have learnt or how they could improve. Teachers plan interesting experiences in a broad curriculum which is enhanced by a wide range of additional activities within the local area. The opportunities to gain an awareness of Britain's cultural diversity are less developed with relatively few planned experiences to strengthen this. Pupils' behaviour is good around the school and exemplary in lessons. Within their overall good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the moral and social aspects are particularly strong. All pupils are exceptionally well known by the staff and this contributes to the good care, guidance and support for them all.

The headteacher's clarity of purpose is a key factor in the good leadership and management of the school. She is supported well by colleagues who are taking on increasing roles of responsibility. Governors are committed to the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. However, they are not fully involved in checking the work of the school and do not sufficiently hold the school to account for its actions.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start. They quickly settle into the routines of a class with older pupils and move confidently and independently between the classroom and the secure outdoor decking. The teachers and teaching assistant work well as a team in planning a well balanced range of activities linked to the topics studied by the older pupils. They carefully observe the children's responses to them, for example on an imaginary 'dinghy ride down the Lydford gorge', before planning new experiences. A few of the whole-class sessions on the carpet are not sufficiently matched to the children's levels of understanding

and this slows their learning at these times. Children make good progress and, in most years, attain the national learning goals expected by the end of the year, with some exceeding them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers provide more detail to pupils about precisely what they have learnt and how they can improve further.
- Extend the range of planned opportunities for pupils to gain a greater awareness of Britain's cultural diversity.
- Strengthen the involvement of governors in checking the work of the school and regularly holding it to account for its actions.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, including those with learning difficulties. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science, having improved significantly over the last two years, particularly in mathematics. The school has established very effective systems for tracking the progress of individuals and whole groups, and uses this information well to set challenging targets for the end of each year. Almost all pupils have attained their targets this year, with a small proportion exceeding them. Pupils in Year 5 are on track to maintain above average standards by the end of Year 6, with all the pupils on course to attain at least the national average in English, mathematics and science, and a fair proportion to exceed it. When they leave the school, pupils have a good level of skills needed for the next stage of education and adult life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils are very positive about school. There are lots of smiles around the playground and pupils of all ages play very happily together. In assembly, they are visibly pleased when one of their peers receives an unexpected reward. Pupils are clear about the importance of a healthy diet and keen on taking physical exercise. Even young pupils can explain about the benefits of fruit over chocolate as a break-time snack. The school recently gained Healthy Schools and Activemark awards in recognition of its good work in these aspects. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and, for example, are clear how to act if approached by a stranger. Attendance is good, despite a recent decline during an outbreak of chicken pox. Pupils have good opportunities to perform in arts productions in the village hall but seldom experience cultural activities valued in other communities across Britain. Many pupils take on responsibilities around the school such as school councillors or helping at lunchtime. They frequently contribute within the local community, at fairs and festivals and willingly help in conservation projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The two teams of part-time teachers plan closely to ensure a coherent programme of lessons for the pupils across a week. Any drawback from small variations in approach is more than offset by the benefits of having additional expertise and enthusiasm in what otherwise would

be an exceptionally small staff team. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and provide activities that are usually well matched to the exceptionally wide range of abilities in their class. However, the introductory and review sessions of a few lessons do not challenge all pupils appropriately. Teachers talk with pupils about targets for their next steps in learning, but when marking their work, they do not sufficiently explain what is good, reinforce what the pupils have learnt or what they need to do to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well, often by the teaching assistants, sometimes being withdrawn for additional one-to-one support. Teachers make good use of computers and inter-active whiteboards in their lessons, for example when explaining about measuring angles with a protractor, and this boosts pupils' understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Imaginative materials are used to support pupils' personal development and the school is systematically introducing new national guidance for English and mathematics. A rolling programme of topics ensures pupils do not cover the same topic twice. There is a strong focus on music and the creative arts, and plenty of planned opportunities to make music, for example recorder playing at lunchtimes. All pupils take part in school productions in the village hall, which is also used for physical education. The school does all it can to overcome the limitations in gymnastics apparatus in this hall. Numerous visits and special events enrich the curriculum, such as the monthly visits to Lydford Gorge and the 'Outward Bound'- style residential visits in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils learn about different faiths in religious education; however, there are few planned visits, visitors and links with urban areas and other communities across Britain in order to strengthen pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of the country.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school rigorously implements procedures designed to safeguard pupils and all staff receive relevant training. As all the pupils are so well known by the staff, the needs of those who arrive with difficulties or who develop them whilst in school are quickly identified. There are good arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties, and regular contacts with their parents and external specialists. All pupils are valued and parents appreciate this. Pupils say they are confident about approaching a member of staff if they have a problem, that they are listened to and any issues are sorted out. The school is developing good systems for providing academic guidance, and pupils are clear about their short and longer term learning targets, although when teachers mark work they do not refer to these targets enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction with a distinct focus on high expectations of pupils and staff. She monitors the school's work robustly and has produced a clear and well structured improvement plan that all can follow. Staff colleagues are increasingly involved in monitoring the school and are clear about their responsibilities. The effective system for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets is contributing to the heightened expectations of all pupils. The headteacher's efficient work rate and excellent organisational skills enable her to lead the school well, whilst maintaining a considerable teaching commitment at Lydford

and serving as temporary acting headteacher of another local school. However, the extreme workload has led to a few things not being managed quite as well as usual, for example the preparation and arrangements for the proposed swap of classrooms at the start of next term. Governors' meetings are well documented. The headteacher is encouraging governors to strengthen the way they check the school's performance in order to give them a clearer view of this. At present, they do not ask sufficiently probing questions, commission reports on particular aspects of the school or carry out enough scheduled visits to school during the day, to enable them to hold the school fully to account.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	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	1
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	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?	2

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	2
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	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

12 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Lydford Primary School, Okehampton, EX20 4AU

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed talking to groups of you, seeing some of your work and visiting your classrooms. You were very helpful in answering my questions. I am pleased you like your school so much and you are right to say it is a good school. Your parents like it as well. Here are some of the highlights I noticed.

- You behave well and are very thoughtful and caring towards one another. I particularly liked the way you play together at playtime and lunchtime.
- You all try very hard in lessons and make good progress with your work.
- Your teachers plan interesting things for you to do and are always thinking of ways to ensure the work is not too difficult or too easy. They plan lots of special events and trips, such as the regular trips to Lydford Gorge.
- Everyone who works in the school takes good care of you, making sure you are safe.
- Your headteacher keeps a close watch on everything around the school. She has lots of ideas about how to make the school even better, and is being helped by the other staff.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on just three things to improve the school further.

- Make sure that when teachers mark your work they tell you more about how well you have done and what you need to do to improve.
- Think of more ways for you to be in contact with people and communities beyond Dartmoor to give you more of an idea about things that are important to different people around Britain.
- Help the governors with the way they check how well the school is working.

I am sure you will have your own ideas about ways to improve the school and will want to talk to your teachers about these.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector