

# Great Torrington Bluecoat Church of England Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113377
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	311238
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Westall

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	221
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kelvyn Bond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Pearson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2004
<b>School address</b>	Borough Road Torrington Torrington EX38 7NU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01805 622333
<b>Fax number</b>	01805 624699

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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school serves an area where the percentage of adults with higher educational qualifications is low and wages are below the national average. The high level of social need in the area has been recognised by the establishment of services to support families and children in the community. The school was designated as an Early Excellence Centre in 2002 and as a Children's Centre in 2006.

## **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. It provides a well-rounded education for its pupils, enabling them to make good academic progress and to develop into kind, caring individuals. Pupils' personal development is a key strength and stems from the supportive relationships that exist across the school. It is clear that pupils like and respect their teachers and that these feelings are reciprocated. As a result, pupils know that teachers have their best interest at heart and that they are valued as individuals. The teachers provide a wide range of worthwhile learning opportunities and make their lessons interesting. It is easy to see why pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They are polite, work and play together amicably and behave well. The school's success is quickly sensed by visitors, who are met by enthusiastic pupils, interesting displays of their work and by committed staff who clearly love their jobs. In these circumstances, it is surprising that the attendance rate is below average. However, too many parents take their children on holiday during term-time, and the attendance of a small number of pupils is too spasmodic.

There is a rising trend in pupils' standards as a result of good teaching. From starting points that are generally well below those expected nationally, most pupils achieve well. As a result, standards at the end of Year 2 are only a little below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, while progress is good for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it is only satisfactory for the most capable pupils.

Teachers' enthusiasm and professionalism shine through in lessons. Their planning is usually good, reflecting their accurate assessments of pupils' needs. Teachers know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear so that pupils are confident about tackling their work. Often, teachers know just when to intervene with well-judged advice and when to stand back and let pupils work things out themselves. Teaching assistants are well briefed and provide good support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, teachers sometimes give the most capable pupils work which is too easy and this restricts their progress. The quality of care, guidance and support is good although teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with enough guidance about how to improve.

Good leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. Self-evaluation procedures are penetrating and effective. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. The headteacher works tenaciously to improve pupils' education opportunities. She communicates her high expectations persuasively to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. Responsibility is delegated wisely and the senior leadership team, subject leaders and governors all fulfil their roles well and contribute to the school's success. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well placed to get even better.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because the teaching is lively and well matched to their needs. They enjoy school and each other's company. Smiles and laughter are everywhere and children find that learning is fun. Although many children do not reach the nationally expected learning goals by the end of Reception, they make good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. There is a good balance between the opportunities provided for

children to learn through focused play and direct teaching. All areas of learning are covered well, and teachers give an appropriately strong emphasis to children's personal development and language skills. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Good induction procedures help children to settle in quickly. Children soon understand school routines, learn to cooperate with others, and to behave well. Adults take good care of the children and provide them with effective support and guidance.

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

- Provide the most capable pupils with more challenging work to accelerate their progress.
- Ensure that teachers' marking provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work.
- Increase the attendance rate so that it is at least in line with the national average.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children's language skills are often particularly weak when they enter the Foundation Stage, and many have difficulties with numbers. In addition, some present challenging behaviour and have to learn how to work constructively with others. Effective teaching in the Nursery and in the Reception classes enables children to progress well across all areas of learning, and the improvement in their personal, social and emotional development is often especially marked. Nevertheless, their standards are generally below those expected at the end of the Foundation Stage, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and in mathematics.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils build well on their good start in the Foundation Stage. Their progress has accelerated in recent years. Greater precision in targeting specific weaknesses in pupils' reading and writing skills, together with more opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems, have contributed to this improvement. Standards are now close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, and reflect pupils' good achievement.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on well together. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop positive relationships, accept differences of opinion and have a well-developed sense of fair play. They respond well when given responsibility, for example as 'buddies' for those who need extra support at break and lunchtimes. Despite the below average attendance figures, it is clear that pupils enjoy school.

Pupils are safety conscious and show considerable care for the welfare of others. They enjoy a good range of physical activities and understand the importance of healthy eating. Pupils have a strong social and community awareness and are keen fund raisers for good causes. Pupils' ability to work cooperatively with others, and their good progress in literacy and numeracy, help them to be well prepared for their future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Because teachers have the knack of making learning interesting and develop positive relationships with their classes, pupils behave well and want to learn. Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and know the children well. As a result, they are often able to pinpoint areas for improvement in pupils' work and to target these accurately. Often, teachers use questions very effectively to probe pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking. The few pupils who need help to establish constructive relationships make good progress as a result of skilful teaching, including by adults who work with them in the Nurture Group. All of these factors help pupils to do well. Nevertheless, there are areas for improvement. The most important weakness is the lack of challenge in the work sometimes set for the most capable pupils. In addition, the pace of some lessons falters because teachers talk for too long, and teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' language skills by accepting very brief answers.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a rich range of learning opportunities which mean they love coming to school. In Years 1 and 2, good provision is made for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and they have many opportunities to conduct investigations in science. The curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but often lacks the challenge necessary to extend the most capable pupils. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to develop their artistic skills, and this is reflected in the ArtsMark Gold award recently achieved by the school.

A wide range of additional activities enrich pupils' learning. Through the 'Forest School Initiative', pupils learn about the wonder of the natural world, develop teamwork skills, and learn to cope with challenges like building shelters. They enjoy many educational visits that bring learning to life. For example, during the inspection, pupils talked enthusiastically about their discoveries in rock pools at Westward Ho, and this enlivened their writing. In addition, a good range of visitors and school clubs enrich pupils' learning.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and know that staff will listen if they have any problems. Child protection procedures are particularly robust and thorough, and very regular health and safety checks are carried out. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. 'My children couldn't be in better hands at school. The staff work really hard to make sure the children are happy,' commented one parent. Strong links are established with external agencies to provide support for pupils when this is required. The school is striving to improve pupils' attendance. It strongly emphasises the importance of good attendance and follows up absences tenaciously.

Pupils benefit from good support and guidance for both their personal and academic development. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn in their lessons, and most pupils know their targets for improvement. However, the quality of teachers' marking

is too variable, and opportunities are often missed to give pupils useful feedback on how well they are doing and how to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Monitoring and evaluation procedures have improved since the last inspection, and are now a strength of the school. The headteacher checks the school's performance rigorously. She is quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils, and alert to situations where people need wise advice and guidance. Because teachers benefit from helpful feedback, including from subject leaders and the senior leadership team, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. It is not surprising that teamwork is strong and staff morale is high. Pupils' progress is tracked more effectively than in the past. Consequently, pupils who may have fallen behind are quickly spotted and supported. Strategic planning is good and generally identifies the right areas for improvement. However, the school recognises that a more precise focus on provision for the most capable pupils is required. Governance is good. The governors are astute, visit regularly and ask challenging questions to hold the school to account.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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>	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	2
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

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**Annex B**

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Torrington Bluecoat C of E Infant and Nursery School, Great Torrington,  
EX38 7NU

Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for being so friendly, polite and helpful. Here are some of the good things we found out.

- You think Great Torrington Bluecoat C of E Infant and Nursery School is a good school and we agree with you.
- You enjoy school very much, like your teachers and have many friends.
- Your behaviour is good.
- The teachers are good at making sure you do well in your lessons.
- The adults take very good care of you, and you know who to go to if you need some help.
- You are lucky to have such a good headteacher who works with the hardworking teachers and other adults to make sure you have lots of interesting things to learn.

We found a few things that need to improve. We have asked the school to make sure that those children who are quick to learn are always given work that makes them think harder and that teachers tell you how to improve your work in their marking. We also found that some children do not attend school regularly enough and this needs to be better.

It was good to meet you. We really enjoyed our short time at your lovely school.

Best Wishes

Yours sincerely

David Westall Lead inspector



4 July 2008

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Great Torrington, EX38 7NU**

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Lead inspector