

Ifracombe Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 113381 |
| Local Authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 311240 |
| Inspection dates | 23–24 January 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Andrew Redpath HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 482 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Alison McCann |
| Headteacher | Catherine Cox |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9 July 2002 |
| School address | Princess Avenue Ifracombe EX34 9LW |
| Telephone number | 01271 863463 |
| Fax number | 01271 863997 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School is a large school. Most pupils come from the local town, which contains areas of significant deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average, as is the percentage who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and are fluent in English. In the past two years, there has been a high rate of staff absence and mobility, in part due to some teachers taking maternity leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School provides a satisfactory standard of education and has some good features. A caring ethos pervades the school which helps pupils to feel safe and happy. In the words of one parent, 'It has a warm and welcoming atmosphere, my child is extremely happy there'. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and most participate in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. They appreciate the respectful and caring relationships between staff and pupils. As one commented, 'All the teachers help you and understand you, everybody is kind'. In the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour. However, inspection evidence suggests pupils' behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Results have varied in recent years, in part due to some experienced staff leaving the school. Teaching is satisfactory and, in some respects, good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and lower attainers make good progress because of the appropriate range of intervention strategies which focus on developing both academic and social skills. The high quality support provided by learning support assistants makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress. Higher attaining pupils make less progress than might be expected because they are not always given sufficient challenge in lessons.

The majority of parents hold positive views of the school. Some, quite rightly, reported concerns about the condition of the building and arrangements for access to the site. The cramped site compromises easy movement about the school and limits the teaching arrangements in some classes. The school has made several improvements, including adding an information and communication technology (ICT) suite and a new library and reorganising parking to improve safety. Repairing and maintaining the building impose a strain on resources and the school has drawn up detailed plans for its long-term improvement.

The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, provides clear direction for the school. They have a very visible presence around the school and know the individual needs of pupils well. Positive steps have been taken in response to the recent staff changes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school has made good progress in tackling areas identified for improvement by the last inspection. Some middle leaders have yet to develop fully their roles in helping to monitor and evaluate the school's work. As a result, there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning between classes. Some recent changes have not yet had time to demonstrate their full effect on raising standards. Governors are developing their ability to hold the school to account. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards by strengthening the monitoring role of middle leaders to ensure that good teaching and learning are consistent across the school
- further develop strategies to raise the achievement of the most capable pupils
- implement plans to improve the condition of the buildings.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment when they join the school varies from year to year and ranges from average to above average. The standards pupils reach by the end of Year 6 have fluctuated in recent years. Those who left school in 2006 made good progress, particularly in English and science, and attained above average results in the national tests. Pupils who left in 2007 attained standards that were well below average in English and mathematics, and fewer pupils than expected gained the higher levels in national tests. In part, this reversal in pupils' attainment can be explained by significant changes in staffing which affected the quality of teaching and learning. Since the beginning of the autumn term, the school has put in place a range of measures to strengthen teaching and to raise standards. Individual and group targets are used effectively to motivate pupils and, in some lessons, pupils are involved in assessing their own progress. These strategies are having a positive effect and pupils are now making satisfactory progress overall. Lower-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress, especially in reading and writing, because of the carefully structured small group phonics sessions for reading and 'booster' classes for writing. Higher-attaining pupils are not doing as well as they might since they are not always provided with sufficient challenge in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning. Relationships with each other and with staff are relaxed and friendly. Pupils' behaviour is good, aided by the popular and effective rewards system. Pupils feel safe and report that any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are dealt with quickly and fairly by staff. Attendance is below the national average, partly due to some children taking holidays during school terms. However, unauthorised absence is low and the school has effective measures in place to chase up absences.

Pupils' understanding and adoption of healthy lifestyles is impressive. Many help to grow vegetables in the school allotment for use in the nutritious school dinners. Pupils are enthusiastic about keeping active and a very high proportion are competent swimmers. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award in recognition of this work. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, as is their understanding of keeping safe. These areas are promoted effectively through the comprehensive personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community, for example, when they help senior citizens, sing in the local church choir or take part in sponsored swims to raise money for charity. The school council is a lively voice, gaining pupils' views and securing improvements such as mirrors in the toilets. Pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own is satisfactory.

Transfer arrangements to the local secondary school work well. Pupils' standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT give them a satisfactory preparation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and showing strong signs of improvement. The school has been fortunate in recruiting some enthusiastic and committed teachers, several of whom are relatively new to

the profession. A pleasant atmosphere in lessons ensures pupils are happy to ask questions if they do not understand. Lessons often provide variety and an element of fun, such as when pupils recite their times tables together, accompanied by physical actions. Teachers use interactive whiteboards confidently to capture pupils' interest.

The school has recently reorganised some of its classes to teach pupils of different abilities together. Teaching strategies for these groups are still being developed and currently planning does not always provide activities which stretch the most capable pupils. This is often due to all pupils completing a similar task and insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their own ideas. Literacy skills are taught well in the 'booster' classes and small withdrawal groups. Skilled learning support assistants assume considerable responsibility for running some of these groups and provide valuable support in lessons, particularly in helping less capable pupils to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Provision in the curriculum for pupils' personal and social development is good. For example, an afternoon each week is devoted to life skills, which include sport, music, cookery and first aid. This is an imaginative and successful initiative which helps to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The school has correctly identified the need to improve the balance within the curriculum and provide a stronger emphasis on the development of academic skills. Initiatives were set in place in September 2007 to improve the provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT. Planning affords pupils opportunities to speak and express their views and opinions, and links between curriculum subjects are clearly identified. Pupils now have more opportunities to develop their basic skills in other subjects, although these are not yet firmly in place across the school. These improvements are beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress, for example amongst higher-attaining pupils in science. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities and residential trips which successfully enhance and extend pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is particularly successful in working with other agencies to meet the needs of a significant number of pupils who have quite complex social and emotional needs. Well-planned initiatives are in place to raise pupils' self-esteem and develop their social skills, for example, in the small nurture groups. Provision for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and detailed assessment captures the small gains these pupils make in their learning. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are robust. Academic guidance is satisfactory and has some good features. Individual target books help pupils to know the level at which they are working and what they aim to achieve next. There are good systems for marking which involve the use of coloured pens to highlight successes and draw attention to points that need correction. Some of these arrangements are quite recent and have not yet become routine in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the headteacher is good. Her energy and commitment have helped to steer the school through a challenging period of change. She works closely with her deputy

headteacher and together they have created a warm and caring environment in which all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, take part in school life. The school has put in place several initiatives to work more closely with parents although these have had mixed success and a few parents do not feel they receive enough information about the work of the school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school through observing lessons and checking pupils' work. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement which are contained in an extensive plan. Recently, there has been a sharper focus on raising pupils' academic performance by using challenging targets and by reviewing the roles and responsibilities of senior staff. It is too soon to evaluate the full effect of some of these changes, but the thoughtful use of data and the regular assessment of pupils' progress against expected targets are beginning to raise standards. Middle leaders and those with responsibility for subjects are not always involved sufficiently in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. This leads to inconsistency between classes and limits the effect of initiatives on raising standards. Unforeseen staff absences amongst subject leaders have meant that progress in the implementation of some initiatives, such as improvements to the curriculum, is taking longer than expected.

The school uses resources effectively to support pupils' learning, especially in the deployment of learning support assistants. Staff at all levels benefit from a comprehensive programme of professional guidance and support. The school has gained the Investors in People award in recognition of this work. Governors provide a satisfactory level of support to the school. They are currently developing their role to enable them to provide more challenge and to question more effectively the school's performance.

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

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| 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

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| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ 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 | 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 | 1 |
| 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 | 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? | 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 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

26 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School, Ilfracombe, EX34 9LW

As you know, I visited your school recently with some other inspectors. Thank you to those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. You were very polite and helpful. I am writing to let you know what we thought about your school.

Here are the main points:

- Ilfracombe Junior School provides a satisfactory standard of education
- the school is a friendly place, you enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is good
- most of you get involved in the life of the school, particularly the after-school clubs and activities
- most of you make satisfactory progress with your work
- those of you who need extra help with reading and writing, or have learning difficulties, make good progress because of the support you receive
- the school is very good at helping you to keep fit and healthy
- your headteacher and staff care for you well and help you if you have a problem. I have asked the school to do three things to make it better:
 - check more thoroughly how well you are getting on in lessons and make sure some of the good things the school is doing happen in all classes
 - give some of you harder work so you gain higher levels
 - improve the condition of some parts of the school.

You can help by trying your hardest in lessons, by taking care of the buildings and by suggesting ways the school can look better.

Best wishes

Andrew Redpath Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B



26 January 2008

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EX34 9LW**

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Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector