

Upton St James CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113402
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	311254
Inspection date	15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Watling
Headteacher	Claire Pryn
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	St James Road Upton Torquay TQ1 4AZ
Telephone number	01803 328286
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small, town school serving a district which includes areas recognised as being disadvantaged. The school is still going through an unsettled period which began two years ago. Numbers on roll and the number of teachers have reduced by a half since the last inspection as a result of a debate about the school's future. There are now four classes, three of which are for mixed ages. Reception children are taught in a class of their own. Two of the five teachers are currently on maternity leave, with temporary staff taking their classes. The deputy headteacher, who was acting as headteacher for a year, is seconded to another local school. A permanent headteacher took over the school in September 2007. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. For a small proportion, English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Children enter Reception with skills below the levels usually expected of this age group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. This judgement may come as a surprise to parents, who are very supportive of the school, but the situation has developed over the last two years during a period of considerable staff change. Despite her short time at the school, the new headteacher has already appreciated the seriousness of the circumstances that she has inherited, most notably surrounding weaknesses in the school's track record and the still-uncertain staffing profile. Her accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses underpins her good insight and intentions. With the help of the local authority, she has outlined plans to put the school back on the right track. However, the overall leadership and management of the school are inadequate and there is a lot to do. The impact of new initiatives on pupils' progress is yet to be seen. Success will depend on staff and governors. Although they are keen to help, neither group is sufficiently involved in monitoring and managing the school's performance. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although some children make good progress and reach most of the goals expected of this age group. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 but fail to capitalise on this in Years 3 to 6. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 2, but below average when pupils leave the school. Although there are signs of improvement this term, teachers' expectations are not high enough and it is clear that pupils underachieve. The root cause of this is in the inconsistent quality of teaching. This ranges from unsatisfactory to good. As a result of the negative effects it has on pupils' learning, teaching is judged as inadequate overall. Teachers have made too little use of information from assessment to show pupils how to make improvements. There is little evidence that, until very recently, teachers have set appropriate targets that challenge pupils to fulfil their potential. Despite this, pupils report that they enjoy school and feel safe. Behaviour is good. Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, is satisfactory. The school takes good care of pupils and provides a satisfactory overall curriculum. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, and improving, after a period when objectives were not defined clearly enough. A strength of the school is in how those who speak English as an additional language, some of whom are new to the country, are supported.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children, many of whom have low starting points, make satisfactory progress in Reception. Most teaching is good, but there are times, when the regular teacher is not involved, when the pace of learning is too slow and activities are not best suited to the age group. Nevertheless, staff make the most of the small number in the class to encourage children's speaking and listening skills. Relationships are good. Children quickly settle in to the school's routines and are successfully encouraged to be considerate. They behave well. Effective support helps children to start to learn to read, develop basic mathematical skills, become aware of what their bodies can do, and express themselves creatively. By the end of Reception, children reach most of the goals expected for this age group, except with regard to the literacy skills that will later develop into writing. There is a good mix of learning through play and more formal lessons. Staff keep good records of how well children are doing. Accommodation is satisfactory, but

difficulties in direct access to the outdoor area restrict opportunities to promote children's physical and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress made in Years 3 to 6 to ensure that pupils do not underachieve.
- Develop the quality of teaching so that there are no unsatisfactory lessons.
- Improve the way pupils' performance is assessed and recorded, and make effective use of such information to set targets to raise standards.
- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of subject coordinators and governors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards in reading and mathematics are average at the end of Year 2. Writing standards throughout the school are below average, with weaknesses in sentence construction, spelling and pupils' use of imaginative vocabulary. The school has identified this and modifications to planning are beginning to make a difference. Whilst there have been some improvements since September in Years 5 and 6, pupils of all abilities underachieve in Years 3 to 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average and are too low compared with pupils' own performance at the end of Year 2. The school's records confirm that pupils fail to make adequate progress. There is little to show that before this term staff had monitored or evaluated the reasons for this. The new headteacher has already instigated significant changes. Making use of assessment information to raise teachers' expectations and ensuring that work challenges pupils appropriately now feature in development planning. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress because they are well supported and fully included in all activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

A strong feature of personal development is pupils' good behaviour (even when the work set is dull). Pupils are usually polite and friendly. Parents overwhelmingly report that their children like school. Pupils are keen to say they feel safe and explain that they know how to get fit and eat healthily. Attendance is satisfactory rather than good because of the effect of holidays taken in term time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with particular strength in pupils' understanding of right and wrong. Although pupils can talk about other countries that they have studied, their awareness of life in Britain as a multicultural society is less than satisfactory and an area for development. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school as a community, for example, as school councillors and house captains. In supporting charities through fundraising and shoebox appeals, pupils show consideration for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are willing to work and play with others and are enthusiastic about information and communication technology. However, below-average basic skills in English and mathematics are a disadvantage and mean that pupils are not well enough prepared for future study.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

There are strengths in how Reception children and, this term, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught. However, teaching is inadequate overall. This is because too many lessons fail to ensure that pupils actively engage in learning to make the progress, and reach the standards, they are capable of. Weaknesses include unclear lesson objectives, work which does not stimulate or sufficiently challenge pupils, and expectations which have been too low. Scant records of how the quality of teaching and learning has been monitored are indications of how this has been allowed to develop. Reassuringly, the new headteacher has already identified where improvements are to be made and, with the active support of the local authority, has made a good start in trying to do something about the situation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in that it covers all required elements, as well as providing opportunities which successfully encourage pupils' personal, social and health education. Satisfactory links with the church and good communication with, and support from, parents have positive effects on pupils' personal development. The school's Activemark award is a really positive feature, linking skills, enjoyment and healthy lifestyles. A suitable range of visits and visitors extends and enriches the curriculum, including a very popular residential trip to Dartmoor for Years 5 and 6. Provision to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Since the start of this term, the planning and recording of how well such pupils are doing have been much improved, with positive effects on their rates of progress, enjoyment and behaviour. Curriculum planning does not always provide work for different ability levels in the same class. Teachers take too little account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. This is most frequently the case in Years 3 to 6 and has resulted in pupils' underachievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes good physical care of pupils and this has a positive impact on their personal development. All required checks on personnel and equipment have been carried out to ensure that pupils are safe. Until very recently academic guidance was inadequate because, the school's assessment procedures and the evaluation of data had not been robust enough. As a result, staff had not been sufficiently well informed to be able to set pupils challenging enough targets, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Consequently, expectations have been too low so that pupils have not done as well as they should. Improvements initiated by the new headteacher have yet to have a significant effect, but there are encouraging signs of progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

That leadership and management are judged as inadequate is not a reflection on the new headteacher. In a short space of time, she has made an accurate evaluation of the school's

strengths and its significant weaknesses. She has drawn up plans and begun the task of making improvements. Parents, governors and pupils are united in their confidence in the headteacher and the support they receive from the school administrator. However, the impact of this renewed drive to raise expectations and ensure that pupils do as well as they should is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, the headteacher's good intentions and determination, backed up with practical solutions and the ability to act on advice, underpin the school's more positive recent development. Governors are clearly supportive of the school. However, governance is inadequate because, in the past, governors have not been accurately informed about the school's performance and have been insufficiently involved in monitoring what goes on. Subject leaders do not have a clear enough view of what is happening in their subjects in other classes. Inadequate monitoring of teaching and learning is one of the main causes of pupils' underachievement by the time they leave the school. However, there are positive features in the way good behaviour is encouraged, the caring way provision for Reception children is managed, and in the very effective support for pupils new to the school and, in some cases, new to the country.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 16 November 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Upton St James C of E Primary School, Torquay, TQ1 4AZ Thank you for your welcome when we came to visit your school. This letter is to tell you about the inspection. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the way you are keen to keep fit and stay healthy. You are right to be so pleased with your Activemark award. We were also impressed by the very positive comments of your parents, who told us that the school has got better this term. Upton St James has gone through lots of changes and there are still more to come. The school makes sure that you are safe and helps you to grow up as sensible young people. It provides a satisfactory curriculum, but teachers do not always give you enough guidance to show you how to improve your work. During the last two years, your school has not been as successful as it ought to have been. There have been some improvements this term, but we have asked the school to:
 - help pupils in Years 3 to 6 make the progress they are capable of
 - make sure all teaching is good enough and that teachers always have high enough expectations of the standards you could reach
 - improve the ways teachers find out about what you are able to do in order to set work that is just right for you
 - improve the way teachers and governors play their part in how the school is run. Your new headteacher is making a big difference to the school, but there is much for staff and governors to do to get things to where they should be. We have recommended that the school gets extra help through a system that adults call 'special measures'. This also means that an inspector will visit the school regularly over the next two years to check that it continues to make progress. We cannot pretend that making improvements will be anything but hard work. You can play your part by trying your hardest and continuing to show that you are proud of yourselves. We wish you all the very best for the future. Yours sincerely Mike Burghart Lead inspector

Annex B



16 November 2007

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We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart
Lead inspector