

# Bickleigh on Exe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113421
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	311260
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Kerly

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	143
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeff Hird
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Goode
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Bell Meadow Bickleigh Tiverton EX16 8RE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01884 855357
<b>Fax number</b>	01884 855217

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following. • The achievement of pupils and the current progress being made by pupils of all abilities, particularly in writing. • Trends and variations in the quality of teaching. • Progress in developing a thematic approach to the curriculum reflecting pupils' interests and the structure of each class. Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and analyses of the school's working documents and the questionnaires completed by parents. Other aspects of the school were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Although this school is smaller than average, numbers are stable and it is oversubscribed. Few pupils come from the immediate village with the large majority travelling from other villages, small rural communities and the nearby town of Tiverton. All five classes have pupils from more than one year group and four of the year groups are split between neighbouring classes. Almost all pupils are White British with none learning English as an additional language. The attainment of children on entry is particularly varied but is broadly in line with that expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities is close to average but there are more pupils with a statement of special educational need than usual in schools of this size. After a period of stability, there have been several changes in teaching staff in the last year.

## 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 strengths and few areas in need of improvement. Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards by the time they leave the school. The very experienced leaders are committed to providing pupils with an exceptional range of experiences and this leads to the pupils' clear enjoyment of school. All pupils are equally valued and welcomed. The large majority of parents appreciate the school's many qualities. One reflected the feelings of others by writing, 'My son is always very happy and keen to go to school.' Others commented positively on 'building the children's self-confidence' and 'the excellent range of additional activities'. The school carries out frequent checks on its performance and has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. This has enabled it to make significant progress since the last inspection and it is well placed to improve further.

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in their first year in school. This good progress is maintained throughout the school by pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. Standards fluctuate a little because of the small numbers in each year group, but are usually above average. Standards in writing have been less consistent than in reading, mathematics and science, but have improved recently following substantial additional work by the school, including extra support for individual pupils and small groups. Standards rose in national tests in 2006 and again in 2007, with more pupils exceeding national expectations than predicted. Pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are well on track to attain their challenging targets and maintain these above average standards. The good development of a range of study skills and attitudes, including research, problem solving and the use of computers, prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and adult life.

The pupils' good progress is directly related to the consistently good teaching and learning. This has been maintained during recent staff changes and is found throughout the school. Teachers plan well together. They have appropriately high expectations and provide stimulating activities that motivate pupils and create a sense of fun in many lessons. The outstanding range and quality of enriching activities beyond the classroom is a major feature of the school and contributes to the overall good curriculum. These experiences include camping and residential experiences from Year 2 upwards, and frequent sporting and musical events and performances that strengthen pupils' cultural development. The curriculum is based on a two-year programme to reflect the mixed-year classes and avoid repetition. The school has embarked on a major review of this curriculum, intended to develop themes across subjects. It has made a good start, but has not yet clearly established the full scope of this review or provided sufficient guidance to teachers on links between subjects and how progression in learning key skills will be achieved. Teachers assess pupils' learning well and this enables them to set work that is usually matched accurately to the wide range of abilities in their mixed-year classes, with some pupils moving between classes for certain activities, for example, when practising letters and sounds work in classes 1 and 2. Some, but not all classrooms, contain good displays and guidance, including key vocabulary and number patterns, related to concepts being learnt. The introduction of 'home writing books' has helped strengthen the involvement of parents in their children's writing and has contributed to the improvements in the quality of writing. Teachers mark work conscientiously, often providing encouragement and some feedback about how to improve, but they miss opportunities to relate this to any short-term targets they have agreed with pupils. The use of learning targets is inconsistent and has a low profile in some classes and in

pupils' workbooks. Not all pupils are clear about what the priorities are for them to improve their work in English and mathematics. That apart, the care, guidance and support for pupils are at least good and, for specific pupils at certain times, they are exemplary. Staff undertake substantial training to enable them to respond to pupils' specific needs and the headteacher and governors are careful to deploy staff with the right expertise to work with those pupils in greatest need. This contributes well to these pupils' confidence and academic progress.

All the statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously. Pupils report feeling safe and well cared for throughout the day in school and are clear about who they would approach if they had a problem. Their good understanding of how to keep themselves safe is promoted by the use of imaginative materials in lessons and visits from people such as a local police officer. They behave well in lessons and around the school. There are well-structured and effective systems for supervising them at all times in the very well maintained and stimulating outdoor areas. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about the arrangements for supervision at playtimes and before and after school. The headteacher and governors monitor these arrangements and are committed to working with parents to reassure them about the levels of supervision.

Within pupils' good personal development and well-being there are some very strong features. Attendance is excellent, being well above the national average and reflecting pupils' enthusiasm for school. School councillors readily offer a long list of things they like about the school but struggle to suggest how it could be improved. Many pupils become involved in local village events and fund raising events for local and national charities. They conscientiously take on responsibilities in helping run the school, such as being peer mediators, class councillors and playground equipment monitors. The paired reading initiative, which most of them carry out diligently, gives them all a chance to support one another. Pupils are very keenly aware of the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise and enthusiastically participate in a wide range of strenuous activities such as the Exmoor challenge, about which one parent wrote, 'My son lives and dies for it.' The school recently received Healthy School and Sportsmark awards in recognition of its excellent work in these aspects.

The headteacher has a strong commitment to promoting pupils' academic progress and personal development and this is a key factor of the good leadership and management. He uses his considerable experience to ensure the school operates smoothly. He involves colleagues well in carefully checking and reviewing the school's performance, constantly reflecting on how to improve the school further. There are good systems to track the progress of pupils towards their challenging long-term targets and this helps promote the above average standards. Governors fulfil their roles well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are fully involved in the strategic decision making process, for example in proposed changes to the structure of the leadership team.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children quickly settle into school, in a class with a few older pupils and where there are established routines. There are wide variations in their attainment on entry. Children of all abilities progress well in all six areas of learning, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world, which is below expectations on arrival. Most attain the learning goals expected for their age and a larger than average proportion exceeds them, except in writing where attainment is broadly average. The teacher and teaching assistants carefully observe the children when engaged in independent activities to assess their responses and

carefully plan new activities to extend their experiences. Difficulties with access to the outdoor areas and sharing a class with older pupils restrict opportunities for children to choose freely or move spontaneously in and out of doors, and this limits the range of activities available at times and the development of their independent learning skills.

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

- Develop more consistent ways of helping pupils to be clearer about their short-term targets, the next steps in their learning and what they need to practise and improve.
- Ensure the developing thematic approach to the curriculum provides teachers with clear guidance about the links to be made between subjects and the planned progression of key skills in mixed-year classes.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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

<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

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

2 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Bickleigh on Exe Church of England Primary School, Tiverton EX16 8RE

Thank you for the way you all made me feel very welcome when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to some of you, visiting your classrooms and seeing some of your work. I was particularly impressed by the ways you try to keep fit and healthy and by how many of you are keen to contribute to the running of the school. You were right to tell me that Bickleigh on Exe is a good school. Here are some more of the highlights I found during my visit.

- You enjoy school very much, especially all the extra activities such as the Exmoor challenge, the overnight camps and sports events provided by your teachers; I think these great activities are among the reasons that encourage just about all of you to come to school every day.
- You behave well and help look after the school and one another very thoughtfully.
- The teachers plan interesting lessons and often make them fun, you obviously listen carefully, try hard and this helps you make good progress.
- Everyone who works at the school takes good care of you and makes sure you are safe; a few of your parents are a bit concerned about supervision outside but there is always someone on hand to watch over you; you are very fortunate to have so many interesting things to do in the school grounds.
- The headteacher and staff are always thinking of ways to improve the school.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on two things to make the school even better.

- Consider ways to help you be clearer about your short-term targets in literacy and numeracy, what you need to practise and how you can improve.
- Make sure the new ideas the school has for making your work even more interesting contain clear guidance to teachers about links between subjects and when to introduce new skills for you to learn.

I know you will want to help the headteacher and you may well have your own ideas about how to improve the school further. Good luck in the rest of this summer term.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead inspector

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