

St Catherine's CofE Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113463
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311279
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Grove

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Williams
Headteacher	Gillian Murch
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Musket Road Heathfield Newton Abbot TQ12 6SB
Telephone number	01626 832665
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a village near Newton Abbot and moved to new premises in 2005. It is slightly smaller than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, principally speech, language and communication difficulties, is slightly above average. Only a small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. The present headteacher was appointed in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and standards, especially in mathematics, and in relation to assessment and target-setting arrangements.

Children come from a range of backgrounds, but on entry to the school, their knowledge and skills are broadly those expected for their age. In the Foundation Stage, they make satisfactory progress so that their standards are average for the start of Year 1. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average, though too few pupils attain above average standards, especially in mathematics, but also in writing.

At the end of Key Stage 2, overall standards are significantly below average. Standards in mathematics, in particular, are significantly below average because too few pupils attain either the expected standard, or the higher levels. The proportion of pupils who reach the higher levels in English and science is also below average. National data show that at Key Stage 2, too few pupils make the expected progress in mathematics in comparison with English. Pupils' overall achievement and progress are therefore inadequate.

One reason for pupils' inadequate progress is the lack of assessment information. Until recently, the school did not have reliable data about pupils' progress from year to year. The new headteacher has started the regular testing of pupils. Information from this testing is helping the school to analyse strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, and to take appropriate action in areas where pupils are not secure in their understanding. The information, which the school is beginning to collect, is allowing comparisons to be made with earlier data, so that the extent of pupils' progress over time can be accurately gauged.

A second reason for pupils' inadequate progress is due to the lack of guidance for pupils about their learning. The school does not set pupils targets that are clearly related to the next stages in developing their knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and science. Similarly, when teachers mark pupils' work, they do not regularly point out the next steps in learning or how pupils could make improvements to their work. As a result, pupils do not understand well enough what they need to do to improve.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but is not consistent across the school. Where teaching has a good impact on pupils' learning, lessons are well paced and teachers match tasks well to the needs of different groups of pupils, which leads to them making good progress. However, where teaching is only satisfactory, there are weaknesses in teachers' planning, classroom management and the effective use of time. The school has developed a satisfactory curriculum. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The school has a positive ethos, which is reflected in the good relationships between adults and pupils, and in the good quality of pastoral care and support that are provided. Pupils respond well to the supportive learning environment and hence, enjoy their time in school.

Most statutory targets were not met in 2007 because the means to predict pupils' outcomes with accuracy were inadequate. The school is committed to equality of opportunity, but this is limited in practice because of the underachievement of boys in reading and writing in Key

Stage 1, and that of girls in mathematics in Key Stage 2. There is a satisfactory partnership with parents, and satisfactory links with other organisations to promote pupils' well-being.

The school's leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. Since her arrival, the headteacher has set an effective direction for the school, as several responses to the parental questionnaire recognise. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The headteacher has accurately identified the issue of pupils' achievement and progress, especially in mathematics, where weaknesses in subject leadership are also evident. The lack of good systems to assess pupils, track their progress and set appropriate targets has been recognised and is being addressed. The school therefore has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children's personal development is good. Attitudes and behaviour are particularly good in the Nursery because of good classroom management. Relationships between adults and children are very good, and teamwork between staff is good. Children are given frequent opportunities to make choices about their activities and as a result, quickly become confident and independent. Good use is made of the outdoor area to develop physical and social skills. The quality of the provision is largely attributable to the enthusiastic leadership of the coordinator. She has established a warm and welcoming environment where children feel safe and happy, and enjoy learning and playing together. However, until recently, she had received too little training and support for the role. Children's progress is satisfactory. They are monitored on an individual basis, but the tracking system does not enable the effective identification of groups or of areas of learning that need further development. There is insufficient recording of children's learning and progress from direct observation and not enough use is made of the assessment information gathered.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in all subjects, especially in mathematics.
- Improve arrangements to assess pupils, and make better use of the assessment information to raise their standards.
- Improve the quality of guidance to pupils through better target-setting and marking so that they understand the next steps in their learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

In 2007, standards at Key Stage 1 were broadly average, as they have been in most years recently. Boys' performance was markedly lower than that of girls, especially in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels was below average. At Key Stage 2, overall standards have been below average in recent years and were significantly below average in 2007. In mathematics, girls' results were well below those of boys. The individual education plans of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties provide them with satisfactory support, so that they make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils behave well around the school and in the classroom. Instances of boisterous behaviour in the playground have reduced since the introduction of staggered playtimes. Pupils work well in pairs and in groups. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Their understanding of healthy living is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy the good physical activities in school. However, the uptake of school dinners has reduced since the introduction of a new menu; the quality of packed lunches is satisfactory, despite the school's efforts to encourage improvement. Pupils know right from wrong and enjoy helping others through fundraising. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. School councillors feel they have an important role in school life and are proud of their contributions. Pupils are involved in various local activities. They appreciate the link with a school in Vietnam and have been interested in the annual residential visit by a Japanese student. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory; they enjoy being at school because of the positive ethos. In view of pupils' current standards, they are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has developed a more consistent approach to lesson planning. However, not all teachers plan well enough to match tasks set to pupils' ability. Pupils are mostly attentive to their teachers, but this varies according to the effectiveness of classroom management. Some teachers are good at asking pupils questions, which develop their understanding well. In an outstanding lesson, for instance, the teacher's excellent use of questions challenged pupils very well to explore the meanings of poems and to make inferences. All teachers make good use of praise. However, this is most effective where it is used judiciously to recognise real effort and achievement. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils, especially those with speech, language and communication difficulties. Other opportunities for assistants to support the work of teachers, such as help in assessing pupils, are underdeveloped.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the provision is satisfactory. Education for health, safety, well-being and emotional development is good. French is well established and artwork is a much enjoyed feature of the curriculum. With the encouragement of the headteacher, teachers are beginning to make cross-curricular links between subjects and to develop the use of literacy in other subjects. A wide range of visits and visitors, including African drummers and Thai dancers, provides enrichment and contributes well to pupils' enjoyment. Older pupils have the opportunity of two residential visits to different locations around the country. As yet, assessment does not allow the school to monitor how well different groups of learners respond to the curriculum. The quality of extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. A range of after-school clubs is being introduced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are confident that the adults in the school are trustworthy and supportive. They also have opportunities to talk to a trained counsellor. Pupils know that any bullying is dealt with quickly. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all pupils, especially those with a statement of special educational need, are well cared for. The majority of parents are very appreciative of the school's support for their children. Procedures are in place to ensure the safety of pupils. Systems to track pupils' academic progress over time are underdeveloped and consequently the school's ability to offer academic guidance is too limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher is building successfully on the school's positive ethos and has a clear vision for future development. In this, she is well supported by the assistant headteacher. Together, they form an effective team. The headteacher has made an appropriate start in accurately diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision and systems. For example, her observations in classrooms have focused particularly on the teaching of mathematics. Planning for improvement in this subject has been lacking in rigour in identifying low achievement and the means to effect the necessary improvement; the leadership in mathematics, has not been effective. The headteacher is aware of weaknesses in recent years in the arrangements to set statutory targets and of the consequent need to set targets, which are realistic but also challenging. Governors meet their legal responsibilities and have a satisfactory awareness of the school's present strengths and weaknesses. Their capacity to challenge the school to improve is satisfactory.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3

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	3
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	3
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?	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?	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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's C of E Primary and Nursery School, Heathfield TQ12 6SB

We would like to thank all of you, and your teachers, for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes. There are many positive things to say about St Catherine's Primary and Nursery. These are the most important ones:

- Your school has a happy atmosphere about it.
- You enjoy school and your behaviour in lessons and around school is good.
- You have good relationships with each other, and with the teachers and other adults. They take good care of you.
- Your personal development is satisfactory.
- The teaching in your school is satisfactory, and is sometimes good.
- Your school has a satisfactory curriculum.
- You like the visits and visitors to your school and the extra-curricular activities.
- Your school has satisfactory links with your parents and the people they ask to come in to help you.

Your new headteacher knows what is good about your school, and what needs to improve. Your school is not yet as good as it needs to be, so we have given it a Notice to Improve, which means that more inspectors will visit the school in the months ahead to see that things are getting better.

- What your school needs to do now:
- Help you to do better in English and science, and much better in mathematics.
- Improve the way that teachers find out how well you are doing, and use this information to help you to raise the standard of your work.
- Improve the way the school sets targets for you and the way your work is marked, so that you have a better idea what to do next to improve your rate of progress.
- Make sure that the subject leadership of mathematics is better.

You can help, too, by working hard and taking advantage of the improvements which your school will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Chris Grove

Yours sincerely Lead inspector