

# Eastcombe Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115504
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	311954
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lorna Brackstone

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	68
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Juliet Edmonds
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Ayling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Dr Crouch's Road Eastcombe Stroud GL6 7EA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01452 770227
<b>Fax number</b>	01452 770942

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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 issues: raising attainment in science, broadening the pupils' multi-cultural awareness and setting suitably challenging targets. Evidence was gathered through classroom observations, work sampling and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Following some concerns by parents, other aspects of the school's work were investigated in detail. These included the consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. The inspector found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were over-generous.

## Description of the school

All the pupils at this very small rural Victorian school are of White British heritage. A significant minority live outside the immediate local area. Pupils are accommodated in one of three classes: Reception/Year 1, Years 2/3 and Years 4/5/6.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils attend school regularly and enjoy meeting their friends and playing together. There is a strong sense of community. Parents are pleased with the way that the older pupils take good care of the younger ones, enabling them to settle into school well. Involvement in the life of the wider community is good. For example, pupils celebrate the birthdays of senior citizens when they serenade them with their violin playing at the Friday lunch club. Through links with Italy and Africa, they have established a sound understanding of customs and beliefs different from their own.

Growing vegetables in the school allotment and then using them to make soup enables the pupils to understand the importance of a healthy diet. Whilst they understand that exercise is important for them, pupils have a limited knowledge of the impact this has on their body. The high quality sporting links, the good range of physical activities offered after school and the annual residential trips to outdoor centres ensure the pupils develop a good range of physical skills and an awareness of working together in a team. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next step in their education.

Most pupils feel safe in school because they are looked after well. A significant minority of parents reported that 'there is a warm, caring atmosphere within the school'. Pupils confidently express opinions through the suggestions box and via class councils. However, a significant minority of pupils do not feel that they are able to talk to adults about a problem or concern they might have. Behaviour is satisfactory but a small number of pupils and parents correctly feel that it could improve if rewards and sanctions were more consistent.

Standards vary from year to year because the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities fluctuates within these small year groups. Standards in English and mathematics are generally above average in Years 2 and 6. In relation to the children's starting points, which are just above the expected level, overall achievement is satisfactory. Recently, the exceptionally high standards in science have dipped to average levels. The school is rectifying this through greater use of scientific vocabulary and a more focused revision programme. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have made a good improvement since the last inspection, when they were below expectations. This is because strong links have been established with the local secondary school, where a specialist ICT suite is used to teach skills. The school's success in a national competition is testimony to the standards in ICT that now exceed expectations at the end of Year 6.

Generally, lessons are relaxed and teachers use questions well to involve the pupils. Links between subjects are being established by teachers and this is making learning more exciting and meaningful for the pupils. For example, the older pupils have used black and white materials to create effective night-time war scenes in art and this has successfully supported their work on the Second World War. However, in one or two lessons, activities are planned around the completion of worksheets which do not meet the differing capabilities of the pupils. In most lessons, there is a clear learning focus which means that the pupils can evaluate what they have learnt. Not every teacher is equally skilful in providing this focus, and there are some inconsistencies in the quality of the marking.

The leadership team has a sound understanding of how effective the school is. The headteacher regularly evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, albeit through informal observation procedures. In some classes, especially where pupils are taught by more than one teacher, these

procedures do not always provide her with sufficiently accurate information for her to pinpoint specific inconsistencies and points for improvement. The school has good information on how well each pupil is doing and although this is used satisfactorily to set challenging targets for improvement, class teachers do not always incorporate this systematically into their planning. This means that some of the activities planned by the teachers do not always match all of the different ages and abilities of the pupils. Governors have a growing awareness of the areas requiring development. They have started to use their expertise well to support the headteacher in evaluating the school.

Although the headteacher, staff and governors have judged their school to be a good school, the inspection judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory. The school has rectified the issues raised at the last inspection and the leaders show continued commitment to improving the school. However, as a significant minority of parents pointed out, some teachers who share classes are not working as a team. This limits the school's capacity for improvement, which is satisfactory.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is satisfactory. Children make a sound start to school because staff have a secure understanding of the developmental needs of young children. The school ensures that these youngsters are well prepared before they start and this means that they settle quickly into school routines. As one parent rightly explained, 'The entry into Reception is nice and gentle and the needs of individual children are considered'. The children make satisfactory progress in Reception and most attain the expected levels by the time they move onto Year 1. Interesting role-play areas, such as 'caves', are created. However, their use as a learning area is limited because of the extremely cramped indoor accommodation. The adjoining outdoor area is not sufficiently well developed and, consequently, there are missed opportunities for their learning.

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

- rectify the inconsistencies in teaching and ensure that staff share the same principles for rewards and sanctions
- introduce consistent ways of marking pupils' work so that they have a clear understanding of how they should improve
- develop rigorous monitoring procedures to check how well the school is performing. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

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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?	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3

<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>	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	3
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	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?	No



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

13 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eastcombe Primary School, Stroud, GL6 7EA

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I enjoyed spending the day with you all. A special thank you to the pupils I spoke to who helped me to find out all about life at Eastcombe Primary.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. By the time you are ready to move onto secondary school, you have reached above average standards in your work. You make sound progress because the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan some interesting lessons but I agree with you when you say that sometimes the activities are 'a bit boring'.

Most of you behave appropriately and are respectful towards your environment. You enjoy meeting your friends at school and I was impressed with the way that the older pupils look after the younger children. I enjoyed hearing all about the ICT competition you won and was impressed with all the different ways you raise money for charity.

Most of you feel safe because the school looks after you satisfactorily. You use the suggestions box and school council well to express your opinions and views. You have a sound understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. I have asked your headteacher to check that the adults in school work more consistently. I have asked your teachers to improve the quality of marking in your books so that you know what the next step in your learning is. I have also asked the people who lead and manage your school to develop ways in which they can check how well it performs.

Once again, thank you for your help. Keep doing your best and working with the adults to make sure that Eastcombe Primary gets even better and better.

With best wishes

Lorna Brackstone Lead Inspector

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Lorna Brackstone  
Lead Inspector