

North Town Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123708
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314681
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Edwards HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Greenslade
Headteacher	Jenny Venning
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Staplegrove Road Taunton TA1 1DF
Telephone number	01823 284676
Fax number	01823 354975

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

North Town Community Primary School is larger than average. Situated close to the centre of Taunton, it attracts pupils from a wide area. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools, Active Mark and FA Coaching awards. Recently it secured International School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'I don't need to know that Ofsted think it's outstanding – I know it already!' This was a comment made by a parent about the school and inspectors agree with this view. North Town is indeed an outstanding school that has gone from strength to strength in recent years. In all respects, the school is living out its motto: 'where every child counts in the heart of the town'. This commitment to children begins as soon as they start school in the Reception classes. 'Induction for our son was excellent. He settled in easily and enjoyed going to school from day one,' wrote one very happy parent. Another summed up the thoughts of many when she wrote, 'The staff are welcoming, friendly and always eager to help.' From this very positive start, pupils are helped to do their very best academically and to care for one another. It is no surprise, therefore, to discover that pupils' personal development and care throughout the school are also outstanding. Excellent adult and pupil relationships support the effective and well-embedded behaviour management strategies and result in high levels of pupil motivation and exemplary behaviour.

By the time they enter Key Stage 1 pupils benefit from the carefully planned curriculum and build on the very good start that they have made in the Foundation Stage. The significant improvements in the care, guidance and assessment of pupils in recent years, particularly in Key Stage 1, mean that standards are now rising rapidly, especially in boys' writing.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science. This is because of the excellent teaching, the wide range of intervention focus groups and the high level of expertise from teachers and support staff. Excellent tracking and assessment procedures are very well embedded and effectively inform the planning of lessons. However, the resulting data are underused in planning challenging activities for the more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress, relative to their starting points.

The curriculum has many outstanding aspects. Planning is meticulous and every effort is made to provide pupils with practical, stimulating experiences, which strengthen their appetite for learning. Superb links have been made with the local and wider community and the excellent range of visits and clubs further enhance pupils' sense of enjoyment and achievement.

At the heart of the school's success is a dedicated and inspirational headteacher who has built a strong team of senior leaders, teachers and support staff to establish a vibrant learning community where every child truly matters. There is a strong commitment to continued improvement and with a supportive and strategically focused governing body the capacity for further improvement is sustained.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is exceptionally good. It provides a safe, purposeful and stimulating environment where children quickly settle due to the excellent care taken by their teachers to establish very positive relationships with parents and carers. The physical environment is safe, secure and carefully organised to encourage learning and independence, and promote outstanding personal development. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are also outstanding. Teachers plan and work effectively together and with other adults to provide exciting and creative learning opportunities in which children succeed. For example, in one

class children confidently used their phonic skills and understanding of complex letter patterns to read words that were well beyond expectations for their age. A further strength is the way teachers and support staff record accurately and in detail the progress that the children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of the existing data to ensure that more able pupils are consistently challenged.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter the school in the Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with expectations for their age, and because of excellent teaching make outstanding progress. Most children exceed what is expected for their age in all areas by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1. Progress in communication, language and literacy, calculation, creativity and knowledge and understanding of the world is particularly strong. In Key Stage 1 they make further good progress. In the past this has been less marked in writing, but strategies put in place this year have resulted in much greater progress, especially for boys, and standards are beginning to rise. In Key Stage 2, pupils make excellent progress and many achieve standards well above national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Last year, over half the pupils reached the higher level in English and mathematics and almost all did in science. Inspection evidence corroborates the school's view that this year most pupils will achieve the expected level for their age; however, due to the high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, fewer are expected to exceed them. Nevertheless, this still represents outstanding progress relative to their starting points and is the result of very effective and well focused teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because they are identified early and benefit from a very high standard of specialist support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school immensely, which is evident in their high level of attendance and enthusiasm for what the school has to offer. They show excellent attitudes towards their lessons and are highly motivated to learn. Pupils are encouraged from an early age to take ownership of their learning and understand what is expected of them. Their behaviour is exemplary both in classes and in the playground. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and confident that when difficulties do occasionally arise adults will help to speedily resolve them. Through activities such as the well established school council and the Play Leaders initiative, pupils are given excellent opportunities to improve the quality of life in school. They work very well in collaboration with other primary and secondary schools on such initiatives as the Genesis Project (which they have won twice) and the Eco School initiative. This gives pupils a genuine understanding of the value of contributing to the wider community and global environment. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of how to eat healthily and maintain fit and active lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding throughout the school. Teachers use a wide range of rigorous assessment strategies to accurately identify the needs of pupils, and this supports their planning and results in imaginative and well structured lessons which usually meet pupils' needs very well. Teachers use questioning skills effectively to accurately judge pupils' understanding in lessons. As a result the pace of lessons is very brisk and pupils consistently make outstanding progress. Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning and keenly assess their own progress in lessons, and this enhances their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. For example, in a gymnastics lesson pupils used a self-assessment wheel to record how well they felt they had done. Teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. For example, in a business project lesson pupils were effectively taught to model the process of a professional design team in producing a logo for the products that they were making to sell. Teaching assistants are very well trained and make an extremely valuable contribution to supporting teaching and learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well taught, both in class and through focus groups as both link very well to provide a cohesive approach towards meeting individual pupils' needs. However, although more able pupils achieve well, the extensive assessment data are not always used well enough to ensure that they are consistently challenged to achieve their full potential.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The very broad and well balanced curriculum is very well planned and organised to ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of activities that help them to develop as confident, independent learners. The use of the local environment figures strongly in topic work, and a cross-curricular thematic approach ensures lessons are relevant to pupils and supports their understanding of the local history and culture of the area in which they live. Another strength is the sports partnerships with other schools, which provide excellent opportunities for pupils to experience a very wide range of physical activities and sports. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities such as samba bands, a boys' choir and whole-class violin teaching further enrich pupils' learning. Visits to the community, both locally and beyond, and residential experiences make the curriculum highly relevant and enjoyable. The strong link with a school in Spain, which Year 5 pupils visited last year, is an example of this outstanding provision and has recently resulted in the school achieving the accolade of 'Spanish School of the Year Award, 2008'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support throughout the school is of a very high standard, and is greatly appreciated by both pupils and their parents. Pupils enthusiastically copy the excellent care and support modelled by adults, so they feel safe, happy and secure. All statutory safeguarding procedures are fully embedded and rigorously applied by the school. Bullying and racism are very rare also because of very effective policies and strategies in place. A wide range of specialist activities such as the nurture and occupational therapy groups provide high level support to pupils with specific needs. The outstanding commitment of the school to its pupils

and families is well illustrated by the employment of a very effective parent support adviser. Academic and personal guidance is also a strength and contributes considerably to ensuring pupils' outstanding achievements. As a result, pupils are fully aware of their targets, and benefit from clear written and oral guidance about how to achieve them, although clear guidance to more able pupils is not consistent enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership shown by the headteacher is exceptional. She has worked single-mindedly to ensure that the school meets the needs of pupils to the highest standards possible and is supported by a highly effective and successful leadership team in which members feel valued and empowered to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Together they have generated an atmosphere of inclusion and commitment which permeates all aspects of the school's work. There is a strong commitment to professional development along with excellent monitoring of teaching and learning, which is why standards are continually improving. The administration and support staff are outstanding as well and they make a significant contribution to the pupils' care and learning needs.

Communication with parents is excellent; the school listens to their views and acts upon them. The restructuring of the governing body since the last inspection has enabled governors to become even more effective in their support of the headteacher and in setting the strategic direction of the school for sustained and continuing success, thereby ensuring outstanding capacity for future improvement.

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

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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

9 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Town Community Primary School, Taunton, TA1 1DF

I am writing to say thank you all for being so welcoming and friendly when we came to inspect your school recently. Your school is a very special place indeed, in fact we think that along with your behaviour and positive attitudes it is outstanding! Here are some of the things that we particularly liked. When you start school in the Reception classes, you settle really well and make very good progress in your learning. You understand about how to keep safe and lead healthy lifestyles. You are caring to one another and think it is important to help others. Your teachers and other adults work very hard to ensure your lessons are interesting and help you to achieve good standards.

You have many fantastic opportunities to join clubs which you enjoy and to participate in activities that help you understand the world around you better. Congratulations too on winning the Spanish School of the Year Award, 2008 – what an achievement!

We have asked your headteacher to think about ways she could make North Town Community Primary School even better for you. In particular, we would like her and the teachers to find ways to make better use of your marked work to ensure that those of you who sometimes find work easy are encouraged to reach even higher standards.

I have every confidence that you will all continue to do your best and work together with your teachers to keep North Town Community Primary an outstanding school. Make the most of all the opportunities your teachers offer you and you will go on to achieve very well in the future.

With very best wishes

David Edwards Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector