

East Coker Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123719
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314689
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Hobbs
Headteacher	Richard Powell
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005
School address	East Coker Yeovil BA22 9HY
Telephone number	01935 862532
Fax number	01935 862532

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

East Coker Community Primary School is situated in rural surroundings on the outskirts of Yeovil. Pupils attend the school from a number of small villages as well as from Yeovil town. A few pupils are eligible for free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and all pupils are fluent in English. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

East Coker is a good school. It has some outstanding features. There is a very real community spirit, with everyone fully committed to raising the already high standards even further. The capacity to do this is good. Standards are significantly above average overall and pupils make good progress during their time in the school. Good teaching and an exciting curriculum, with outstanding enrichment opportunities, motivate and encourage pupils to do their best.

Children start school with the skills expected for their age and they achieve well in their first year. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that almost all children reach the expected goals by the end of Reception and most exceed them. This strong start is built on well in later years. However, standards in writing, especially for boys, are not as good as those in reading and mathematics throughout the school. The school has already identified writing as an area for improvement and has put plans into place to address the issue. Action taken is beginning to make a difference but it is too early to see the full impact.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and this is a major factor in the good progress they make and the high standards they reach. Relationships are excellent. Pupils are respected and listened to, creating a very positive and supportive climate for learning. In the words of one pupil, 'Teachers are really fair, more like friends than teachers.' As a result, pupils' attitude to school life is excellent, they are very polite and their behaviour is exemplary. They really appreciate all the activities they are offered and are very aware of how well looked after they are.

Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. The school is a very safe and happy place to be and parents make comments such as, 'Teachers are approachable and caring'. Although academic guidance through marking is good, pupils do not have sufficient involvement in setting regular individual targets for improvement or assessing where they are in their learning. This means that they are not always able to take a full enough part in improving their work.

The new headteacher has taken a firm lead in the focus upon improvement whilst being dedicated to continuing to provide an all-round education for every pupil and retaining the very strong community ethos of this village school. Parents are very pleased with the seamless changeover in leadership and many remarked upon the headteacher's visible, caring and approachable style and the excellent relationships he has forged with pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school, although a few would like more formal opportunities to discuss their children's progress throughout the year.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a settled start in Reception because the school has good induction procedures and links with pre-school settings. Personal, social and emotional development is a particular strength as is evident in children's confidence and the excellent relationships they make with adults and with one another. The gains made in personal and social skills prepare them very well for their future learning. A well-planned curriculum ensures good learning opportunities that are entirely appropriate for the Early Years child. There is the right balance between adult-led activities and those that children undertake independently. Teaching is good, with effective use of weekly assessments used to inform the next steps in children's learning. Taking account of playgroup assessments on entry to school and achievement by the end of the year,

progress is good in all areas of learning. However, a school evaluation of the assessment on entry and progress overall is not yet in place. Provision for outdoor play is limited by access and shelter.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school, especially for boys.
- Increase the involvement of pupils in setting targets for improvement and assessing their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over the last year, the school has taken rigorous action to address a dip in standards at the end of Year 2. Recent assessments show that pupils are now making good progress by the end of Year 2, building on their strong start in the Reception Year. Standards overall are currently above average at the end of Year 2. Progress is consistently good throughout the junior years, ensuring that pupils continue to achieve well. By the end of Year 6, they reach standards that are significantly above average overall. This year, the school has exceeded its targets. The school has been particularly successful in addressing a previous dip in higher level mathematics. Strategies such as 'Booster' groups and help from an advanced skills teacher have ensured that more able pupils have made the good progress expected of them. However, although reading standards are high, pupils across the school, especially boys, do not do as well in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and, as a result, attendance is good. Pupils are well aware of how to keep safe and talk of the importance of fire drill procedures, how to say 'no' to things they know are not right, and what to do if they are in any kind of difficulty. They feel safe at school and say, 'There's always someone there for you'. They are keen to adopt a healthy lifestyle through healthy snacks, daily 'Wake and Shake' and all the sporting activities the school offers. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They demonstrate through their quiet response in assembly how they are able to take advantage of times for reflection. Through links with countries such as Kenya, they develop a good understanding of other cultures and beliefs. They realise the responsibilities involved in being a 'buddy' to younger pupils and feel valued through the opportunities given to them for decision making when serving on the school council. Their good literacy, numeracy and computer skills, together with their personal attributes, prepare them very well for life in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan exciting lessons and have high expectations of both work and behaviour. They form excellent relationships with pupils and, as a result, behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to capture pupils' interest and introduce what they are going to learn. The pace of lessons is good and teachers' questioning skills focus on encouraging pupils to think and explain what they know, ensuring that they make good progress. Thorough planning identifies challenging tasks that usually match the needs of pupils

well. Marking is good and pupils say that it in some cases it helps them to know what they must do to improve. However, pupils do not refer to their targets when beginning tasks and are not asked to assess how well they think they have learned by the end of the lesson. This limits their knowledge of the next steps they should take to improve their learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support those with learning difficulties, enabling them to make good progress in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with outstanding enrichment and extra-curricular activities, particularly in modern foreign languages, sport and music. Much of this is available through the very good links the school has with secondary schools and parents. The production of 'Puss in Boots' in French is particularly ambitious and challenging for the Year 5 pupils involved. English and mathematics are planned well and the new national frameworks for these subjects have already been implemented. An emphasis on speaking and listening and the use of lively video clips as a stimulus for writing, together with the introduction of a new phonics programme for younger pupils, are beginning to improve writing standards. Information and communication technology is used effectively in other subjects and as a tool for learning at home. Although literacy and numeracy skills are practised well across the curriculum, too much emphasis is currently placed upon content in other subjects. This means that there is not enough focus on developing new skills in those subjects, such as those needed to support enquiry in geography and history.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for and well known to staff, who provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which to learn. Parents are very pleased with the level of personal care and support offered to their children and, in the words of one parent, 'Teachers and class assistants know all the children and therefore the children feel confident in their environment and able to talk to them on a confidential and friendly level.'

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good. Targets for pupils with individual education plans are sharply focused and help them to make good progress. All pupils have targets in their termly assessment books for English, and older pupils have targets for mathematics. However, the setting of individual targets with all pupils on a regular basis is not yet in place so they are not always sure of what they can do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are key reasons for the school's success. The new headteacher is a strong leader with a clear vision for future improvement. He has broadened the leadership team, and other senior leaders support him well and share his high expectations for the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the correct priorities. As a result, it has helped leaders raise standards this year. Pupils' progress is tracked regularly and challenging targets are set for performance in national tests. In particular, 'booster' classes and the use of an advanced skills teacher for more able pupils who were previously underachieving have contributed significantly to higher attainment in mathematics. An emphasis on the teaching of sounds and

letters has secured a more focused approach to the teaching of writing. The governing body provides good support and guidance to the school. Governors know the school well. They ask challenging questions but are supportive and are increasingly becoming involved in the strategic direction of the school. Improvement has been good since the last inspection and the school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development. Comprehensive action plans are in place to move it on further. The school has valuable links with other schools and outside agencies.

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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 ¹ 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?	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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

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?	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of East Coker Community Primary School, Yeovil BA22 9HY

Thank you very much for the warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and talking with you. We especially enjoyed watching you rehearse your French play. You are involved in many exciting activities and your school provides you with a good education.

These are some of the things we found:

- You work hard and make good progress so you achieve high standards by the time you move to secondary school.
- You enjoy school very much, attend well and appreciate all the extra activities the school provides for you.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe.
- You care for one another, get on exceptionally well together and your behaviour is exemplary. Well done!
- You and your parents told us how well the school takes care of you and we agree that this is excellent.
- Your headteacher, teachers and all other adults lead your school well.

We have suggested two things to make your learning even better:

- We have asked your teachers to help all of you to reach the same high standards in writing as you do in reading and mathematics.
- We have also asked them to help you set targets for your work so that you know what to do to improve further.

Thank you once again for your help.

With best wishes

Anna Sketchley Lead Inspector



10 July 2008

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