

The Duchy School Bradninch

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113061
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325747
Inspection date	24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Edwards HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	190
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Garner
Headteacher	Claire Baillie
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bowley Meadow Townlands Bradninch Exeter EX5 4RF
Telephone number	01392 881482
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The effectiveness of intervention strategies in supporting pupils' needs
- The extent to which teaching ensures pupils' good progress in learning
- Whether pupils' personal development and well-being remain outstanding.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, some staff, pupils, and the chair of governors, and from the parental questionnaires. Lessons were observed and school self-evaluation, other documentation and samples of pupils' current and previous work were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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 the report.

Description of the school

This small school serves the town of Bradninch and the surrounding area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has several outstanding features. Excellent provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage gets the children off to a flying start in their education. Throughout the school, pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development, which is due in part to the exemplary pastoral care and support that the school provides for all its pupils.

'I cannot praise the staff at the school highly enough, they make it a wonderful place to be.' 'Staff give a lot of energy to the children, and stimulate them with an amazingly wide range of subjects.' These comments are typical of those made by the vast majority of parents who returned the Ofsted questionnaire, and they are fully supportive of the work of the school. Parents particularly appreciate the improved communications and the inclusive management style introduced by the new headteacher. Indeed, the driving force behind the school's good leadership and management is the headteacher's vision and determination to ensure all pupils receive high quality care and education. She has developed a strong sense of teamwork among all members of the school community in order to focus on raising standards and pupils' achievement. The governing body has developed a stronger sense of partnership with the school and, as a result, the improved communication with the school means governors are better informed and empowered to hold the school to account. For example, subject leaders report regularly to the governing body which in turn allows governors to offer appropriate challenge as well as support. Recent training for governors has further enhanced their strategic leadership and management skills. These developments, along with the good progress the school has made in addressing areas for development since the last inspection, ensure that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being have many impressive features, such as their excellent behaviour, their enjoyment of school and their appreciation of the many opportunities to participate and excel in a wide variety of additional school activities, such as the popular and successful tag-rugby club. Relationships among pupils are excellent and they thrive on responsibility, whether as a school councillor or through the recently established Eco Schools Action Group. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. They feel very safe in school and are confident that when inappropriate behaviour does occasionally arise it will be dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers. In addition their excellent social skills prepare them well for their future education and economic well-being. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils contributing to the school and wider community. These links are celebrated through lively displays around the school and regularly in assemblies. The strong links with the local churches further contribute to good social cohesion and to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral and cultural development. All legal requirements for safeguarding pupils are fulfilled, and all reasonable steps are taken to ensure children are safe within school.

Transition arrangements are managed carefully as teachers continue to nurture and support pupils' development from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1. Overall, pupils make good progress at this stage and achieve above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. This is because particular attention is given to rooting pupils' newly acquired skills firmly in a stimulating learning environment. There have been variations in the past in pupils' progress, due in part to the varying proportion of pupils with particular learning needs in any one year group. The school's improved attention to promoting continual progress and the provision of an engaging curriculum is making sure the desired impact on raising pupils' achievements is sustained. The early identification of pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities, along with effective links with external support agencies, ensures that these pupils make good progress. However, challenge for more able pupils is lacking in some lessons, with the result that the pace of learning is sometimes too slow. Targets for pupils' individual development are insufficiently sharp at this stage to secure the more rapid progress they are capable of making to achieve their aspirational targets.

Although standards by the end of Key Stage 2 remain broadly in line with the national average, recent improvements to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' work have resulted in the good rates of progress now seen in most lessons. The school's well-trained teaching assistants play a vital role at this stage in supporting good academic progress. The reasons behind the expected drop in standards seen in 2008 have now been effectively addressed. The school's most recent assessment information indicates that the pupils now in Year 6 are on track to achieve their aspirational targets in English, mathematics and science this summer.

Pupils' good academic achievement is the result of predominantly good teaching and learning and the development of a stimulating curriculum. In the best lessons, teaching is constantly modified in response to the learning needs and progress of individuals. Where there is insufficient structure to lessons or teaching lacks rigour, the more able pupils do not progress as well as they might. The school has been successful in encouraging pupils to become involved in the assessment of their own work. For example, older pupils are able to look objectively at their classmates' work and praise its strengths as well as make helpful suggestions about possible improvements. This is particularly well done within English but less well developed in other subjects such as mathematics. The school acknowledges rates of progress in mathematics to be slightly less than in English and science, and leaders have rightly made this a priority for further work within the school improvement plan.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children settle quickly and happily into school because of the effective links with pre-school providers and the carefully structured induction procedures. Children have access to a wide range of learning opportunities that enable them to establish themselves as independent learners very quickly. This is because the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is exemplary. No time is lost in making excellent use of assessment procedures to find children's starting points and then match teaching and learning activities precisely to individual needs. From the outset, specific help is given to those children who need to catch up on aspects of their learning. Children's literacy and mathematical development have been identified as areas for particular focus. Every opportunity is taken to develop and reinforce these important skills, often through individual support. Children's progress is closely monitored and recorded on the class learning board, through which children begin to develop their understanding of setting targets and achieving success.

All adults work to ensure that care and welfare are given a high priority, and this leads to children demonstrating good self-confidence, especially when communicating with adults. Provision for physical well-being is excellent. Great care is taken to ensure the curriculum motivates and engages children extremely well, which further helps them to become excited about learning. Thoughtful use of indoor and outdoor spaces makes sure that children learn within a spacious, safe and secure environment. The school places particular emphasis on the all-round development of children and careful planning reflects this. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that children thoroughly enjoy their learning and make exceptionally good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lessons make consistently effective use of time, pace and challenge so that all pupils, and particularly those identified as underachieving or more able, make maximum progress in their learning.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	1
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Duchy School, Bradninch, EX5 4RF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and valued the opportunities we had to talk with some of you and see you in your lessons. In return, I want to tell you what we thought of your school.

We have decided yours is a good school. This means we were impressed with many things that we saw, but particularly the way the youngest of you settle so well to learning and how you all continue to develop outstanding personal skills and attitudes. You are a credit to yourselves and your parents!

Your behaviour is outstanding. You work well together in lessons and include one another at playtimes. You know how to keep safe and make sensible, healthy choices when eating. You have many opportunities to get involved in your community, and to raise money for good causes. Your parents appreciate all the hard work the school does to keep them well informed of your work and progress. We particularly enjoyed being invited to your assembly and listening to your fantastic orchestra. These really are special times for you to celebrate your successes as a school community. You enjoy and make the most of a good curriculum, which your teachers work very hard to make exciting for you. You say you particularly enjoy the many clubs and activities on offer.

Until recently your academic achievement, by the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, has been satisfactory, but through the good teaching and careful monitoring of your work, far more of you are now making good progress in lessons. Your teachers tell us you are on track to achieve good results in your summer assessments. Well done! To help you all to achieve even better standards we have asked your headteacher to take the following action:

- Make sure your teachers use the time in lessons effectively to provide more pace and challenge to your learning, so that all of you are able to make even better progress and achieve even higher standards, especially in mathematics.

If you maintain the excellent attitudes you showed us you will succeed in all you do.

Yours faithfully

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector