

Honiton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113098
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325752
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	447
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	Michelle Perryman
Headteacher	Andrea Brown
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Clapper Lane Honiton EX14 1QF
Telephone number	01404 548700
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Honiton Primary School is a larger than average school with an Early Years Foundation Stage that admits children part time from the age of 3. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a very small minority of pupils of other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The range of learning difficulties and disabilities is broad, including speech and communication problems and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical needs. The school site accommodates one half of the Honiton Children's Centre. The inspection of Busy Bees Pre-school was carried out the day before this inspection and is reported separately. There has been considerable staff turnover since the last inspection and a few posts are filled by temporary teachers covering long-term absence.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. Its overall effectiveness is inadequate and the school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress pupils make through Years 1 to 6 and in the quality of teaching and learning.

Recent changes to the way the school is led and managed are beginning to bear fruit. As a result, the school currently provides an acceptable quality of education for its pupils. There are particular strengths in the pastoral care for children that lead to strong personal development and well-being. The senior leadership team has a clear view of strengths and their analysis of pupils' performance is accurate. This is ensuring that pupils who are falling behind are clearly identified and appropriate support put in place. The school's evaluation of where it is underperforming is well understood but the school has an overly positive view of how much impact recent developments have had on pupils' achievements in writing and mathematics and generally for the more able. School improvement planning is well focused on a number of priorities to improve the outcomes for all pupils. However, it lacks an overarching strategy for improving teaching and learning to help guide the considerable enthusiasm for improvement held by school leaders. The satisfactory progress of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, combined with the good quality of working with extended services and other partners, demonstrates that the management team has begun to take positive steps to secure the necessary improvements.

Pupils' achievement is inadequate and too many pupils do not reach standards expected of them. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now making a good start in their development and learning in all areas as a consequence of strong leadership and good provision. Overall, teaching and learning are inadequate and not good enough to address the considerable gaps in pupils' writing and mathematics skills as they move through the school. Senior leaders and most staff have a clear idea about what constitutes good learning but there are still too many lessons where the pace of the lesson is too slow and the match of work is not ensuring the appropriate level of challenge. There is some effective teaching and learning and senior leaders and subject managers are sharing this with all the staff. A legacy of ineffective learning means that the school has not made the progress expected of it since the last inspection.

A below average proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. These, combined with the school's own survey, indicate that parents value the school's caring ethos and the enthusiasm of staff. A few parents are concerned about the high staff turnover and the impact on their child's progress. The leadership has taken good decisions in managing this and lessening the impact on learners. Pupils report that all the teachers are friendly and helpful. Pupils generally behave well, treating each other with consideration. Their personal development is good. Pupils like coming to school and their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy the lively curriculum that has a good impact on their preparation for future economic well-being. There are a good range of sporting activities and this contributes significantly to their healthy outlook. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to work together during lessons, and enjoy the chance to organise their classes and work areas and promote better playtimes.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school and the governors provide the necessary challenge. Senior leaders have still to develop fully their roles and responsibilities and not all subject leaders are involved closely in monitoring and evaluating their subjects. This means that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning between classes have not been resolved. Initiatives to raise standards and revisions to the school's monitoring procedures are starting to work and this demonstrates the school's capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the combined Nursery and Reception unit receive a good start, with many making excellent progress in their personal, creative and physical development. Indications from children's profiles confirm that the majority are on track to meet the expectations in all areas of learning and development by the time they leave Reception. They settle in quickly and love learning in the caring and supportive environment. Children work well together in groups, and sustain their interest when required to learn without direct adult support. They benefit from the close partnership between parents and staff. The leadership and management of the Early Year Foundation Stage are good. Systems are well organised and staff work well together. Children's well-being is afforded paramount importance, so they flourish in a secure environment. Children rapidly gain in confidence because teachers and classroom assistants celebrate their efforts and successes. Speaking and listening have a high profile and children are taught to form letters and numbers correctly. There is a good balance between activities chosen by the children and those led or supported by adults. The outdoor provision is also used effectively to enhance children's learning in parallel with their classroom experiences. The majority of children achieve good outcomes in all areas of their learning because the planning is tightly linked to the information on their progress. A good feature of the unit is the responsibility given to adults to plan activities to support children's development and foster their interests. Children's progress is assessed regularly and accurately. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has recognised the need for more rigorous evaluation of progress and provides good guidance to the relatively new team on how to improve this aspect of their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in all year groups by ensuring that the work set for pupils helps them to fill the gaps in their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that work is more closely matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils.
- Provide an overarching strategy for evaluating the impact of action to improve teaching and use the information to plan for further school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

When they start school, children's knowledge, skills and abilities are similar to those of typical three-year-olds. Children currently make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 over the past few years have been broadly average but the proportion gaining the higher levels in writing is below average. The school's data show that progress is satisfactory overall but some pupils are still not reaching their potential in writing. As pupils move through the rest of the school, their progress varies unacceptably, and is inadequate overall. Although there has been some evidence of improving

progress during the past six months, the school is not rigorously implementing agreed strategies for improvement to ensure that all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. Pupils of average ability have generally caught up in Year 6, although standards have been below average overall with few pupils reaching higher levels. Early indications are that most pupils in Year 6 will meet their targets, which are realistically based on their uneven progress through Key Stage 2. Whilst targets seek to close the gap for less able pupils, they do not adequately stretch the performance of more able pupils. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties benefit from the carefully planned extra support they receive, and this helps them to make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, and really enjoy the variety of sporting activities which they are offered. They have a mature view of how to keep themselves safe and use equipment sensibly. Some children find it difficult to settle in lessons, but the school's arrangements for pastoral support and individual care mean that behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. No unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during the inspection. Attendance is satisfactory, but steadily improving following considerable efforts by the school. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and a positive aid to learning. Pupils leave school with good attitudes to school. They cooperate and collaborate well, whether as partners or groups, and their good skills in using information, communication and technology support independent learning well. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and the school's ethos of consideration for others and trying your best is well understood. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the smooth running of the school community through the school council and the management of playground equipment, but they have too few opportunities for involvement in the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Although some aspects of teaching have improved recently, teaching is not consistently strong enough to enable pupils to make up for their relatively slow progress in recent years. In too many lessons, teaching does not involve pupils actively enough and tasks are insufficiently challenging. As a result, some pupils work at too slow a pace, become distracted and lose focus. In these lessons, the emphasis is on what pupils are doing, rather than on what they are expected to learn. Too often, teacher talk dominates lessons at the expense of pupils' thinking time. Teaching assistants work collaboratively with the teachers to plan appropriate interventions but are not always deployed effectively to support pupils' progress. During the inspection, inspectors observed good teaching which enabled pupils to make good progress. These lessons were brisk in pace, made use of challenging questions, had engaging tasks and provided good opportunities for pupils to make progress regardless of their starting points. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons that allow them to actively participate and to discuss their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

With the introduction of the International Primary Curriculum, teachers are increasingly effective in linking subject areas to enrich pupils' learning and personal development. For example, in the successful 'Olympics' theme, Year 5 pupils produced surveys and reports that culminated in them organising a successful Sports Day. The curriculum is satisfactorily matched to pupils' needs and is inclusive. However, it does not cater sufficiently for those who are more able or gifted and talented. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and enquiry skills through regular use of computers. Provision for education in safety, health and well-being is good. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of clubs at lunchtimes and after school, which are very popular. A good range of off-site visits for all pupils as well as a two-day residential visit for Year 6 further contributes to their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care and support provided by the school ensure that pupils are well cared for, particularly in the development of their social and emotional skills. There are good links with a range of agencies who work effectively together to support the wide range of pupils' needs. Particularly noteworthy is the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as the high quality transition arrangements for vulnerable pupils who are moving on to secondary education. Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe meet current requirements. Pupils say that they feel safe and are confident that any concerns they have are heard sympathetically and dealt with promptly. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and checks are carried out to ensure the suitability of staff.

In the last two years, the quality of academic guidance has improved markedly. Pupils receive good advice through marking and appreciate the 'points for progress' comments from teachers. Many pupils use these comments alongside their 'learning journey' booklets to understand what they need to do to improve. However, while the system itself has the potential to improve progress, the targets are not sufficiently challenging for all pupils and the information that it provides is not used consistently across the school by individual staff. For example, not all pupils knew or understood their targets and this was most evident in discussion with lower ability groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders have a satisfactory understanding of the relative strengths and areas for improvement. Governors have been supportive in helping leaders in addressing weak aspects of the school's performance. They have re-organised their strategic management to ensure they provide the necessary challenge in all areas of the school's work. The evaluation and review of some school policies are inconsistent but the governors are taking appropriate action to bring all policies in line with the best. The headteacher's and senior leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning is accurate. As a consequence of monitoring lessons, leaders and managers have introduced strategies that are beginning to improve learning and help groups of pupils to catch up. These include a sharper use of marking and assessment to inform lesson planning and tracking of pupils' progress. The provision of well-managed, intensive support

groups for pupils who are underperforming is proving effective. As a result, pupils are now in a much stronger position to improve their work. An agreed set of values is helping steer school improvement but there are too many developments on a range of fronts. The lack of prioritisation means that strategic planning has not developed into the driving force for improving teaching and raising expectations across the whole school.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	4
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

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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

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

30 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Honiton Primary school, Devon, EX14 1QF

Thank you for making us so welcome on our recent visit. I thank those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. You were very polite and helpful. I am writing to let you know what I thought about your school. The school is already changing for the better but it has not done enough to make sure that you all do as well as you should, both in lessons and through your time at Honiton. We are asking the staff and governors to make some more improvements and we are recommending that the school gets some more help over the next year.

Here are the main points:

- Your school is a friendly place, you enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is good.
- You enjoy your lessons; particularly work on the computers and the practical subjects like sport and science. You also like the chance to work in groups, which helps you to feel good about yourselves.
- Most of you are very aware of what you have to do to get better and value the 'learning journey' books.
- The youngest children are really well provided for.
- Your headteacher and staff care for you well and get help for you if you have a problem.

I have asked the headteacher and other school leaders to do three things to improve the school:

- Help some of you make better progress in your writing and mathematics skills.
- Help all teachers to set work that is carefully matched to your abilities so they can become as good as the best in your school.
- Check up on the things they have already done to improve teaching to be sure it is having a good effect.

Yours faithfully

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector