

Monkleigh Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113162
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325765
Inspection date	14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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)	65
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	Mackie Toole
Headteacher	David Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Monkleigh Bideford EX39 5JY
Telephone number	01805 623269
Fax number	01805 623269

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

- The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:
- the attainment of pupils on entry to each key stage and their overall progress
- the provision for writing and the impact of recent changes designed to improve writing
- the quality of provision in mixed-year classes
- steps towards promoting a shared approach to leadership and clarity of direction.

Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, including parts of lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and a governor, and analyses of the school's working documents and the questionnaires completed by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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 this report.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average, with the number on roll declining slowly. Nearly all the pupils come from the village of Monkleigh and the surrounding rural area. A few come from the small towns of Torrington and Bideford. They are taught in three classes. The youngest children, in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), share a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The two classes for older pupils are each comprised of two year groups. Almost all the pupils are White British and all speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below that usually found. There have been significant changes in staff, with more than half the current teachers appointed during the last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good features along with some aspects that need to improve. The two most significant strengths are the good personal development and well-being of all pupils, including their excellent behaviour, and the good care, guidance and support they receive. These qualities are unanimously appreciated by the many parents who responded to the inspectors' survey. One reflected many similar comments by writing, 'My child is very happy in school and really looks forward to going every day.' Others wrote of the 'nurturing atmosphere' and a 'sense of caring for each other with a big emphasis on family values'. The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing issues identified at the time of the last inspection, particularly in improving attendance, which is now above average, and more recently by introducing ways to improve writing. The governors have experienced significant external problems in trying to implement plans to improve the accommodation, and this continues to have an adverse impact on the range of experiences that can be provided. The school has a reasonably accurate view of its performance in most areas but is overgenerous in the way it reports a few of its findings. Nevertheless the experienced headteacher, with the support of the new staff team, is very clear about the next steps needed for its development, and the school is securely placed to improve further. Pupils show outstanding social and interpersonal skills and are exceptionally considerate and caring of one another. One pupil told an inspector, 'There is no bullying here. Everyone gets on very well together.' Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and report that staff always help if they have a problem. The school rigorously implements procedures designed to safeguard pupils, with regular staff training. It works closely in partnership with external professionals, parents and other schools to promote the pupils' well-being. Pupils have a good awareness about the importance of healthy lifestyles and enjoy the games and sport on the field. The school recently received Healthy School and Activemark awards in recognition of its good work in these aspects. Pupils contribute well to the local community and help around the school, for example as school councillors organising talent shows or fund raising for charity. The implementation of recent requirements regarding a strategy for community cohesion is at an early stage of development. While there is some impact in the provision both locally and further afield, such as the links with a school in Japan, pupils have a more limited understanding or experience of the cultural diversity of the British community.

The attainment of children on entry is varied but overall as expected nationally for their age. Progress in the EYFS and by older pupils is satisfactory. Standards fluctuate from year to year as there are very few pupils, but overall standards are average at the end of the EYFS and by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards in reading and mathematics are frequently a little above average and higher than in writing. Progress in writing is now accelerating in response to new approaches, but it is too soon to see the full impact of these. The few pupils with learning difficulties make sound progress. There is a satisfactory programme of assessments as pupils move from one year to the next. The targets set for Year 6 have been revised upwards and are appropriately challenging, given the pupils' current levels of work. These pupils are on track to maintain average standards, developing a satisfactory level of skills needed for their next stage of education and adult life.

Teachers have very good and caring relationships with the pupils and make good use of the well-trained teaching assistants, often deploying them to support the few vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties. Whilst there is much good teaching, the quality of teaching

and learning is satisfactory rather than good because on occasions the work set for pupils is not matched precisely enough to the unusually wide range of abilities within the mixed-year classes. When this happens, broadly similar work is set. Consequently, expectations for the whole class limit the rate of learning of different groups, especially for the older and/or more able pupils in the class. The teachers provide good academic guidance. This ensures that all pupils have a clear view about how they are progressing. Pupils are able to reflect well on their learning, assess each other's work and identify how well they are implementing their own learning targets.

Teachers plan interesting and stimulating experiences and overcome many of the constraints imposed by the lack of accommodation, including having no hall. The satisfactory curriculum is enhanced by good quality enrichment opportunities which the pupils particularly enjoy, for example the drama performances in the Torrington theatre, described as 'legend' by one parent. These experiences contribute to the pupils' high levels of confidence and self-esteem. The quality of teaching is strengthened by the good use of part-time teachers, who bring additional subject expertise, for example in science and art. However, this makes it more difficult for teachers to make links between subjects across the curriculum, especially in the older pupils' class, where pupils have five teachers each week. Whilst the curriculum in the EYFS is satisfactory, the temporary arrangement for outdoor provision significantly restricts the range of experiences and opportunities for these children.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is highly respected by parents, staff and pupils and works effectively to lead the school in addition to his substantial class teaching role. He provides a clear sense of direction, with a particular commitment to the pastoral care of all pupils. He has successfully forged a united staff team following a difficult period of uncertainty and staff changes. There is a sound programme for checking on the school's performance but an over-reliance on the headteacher, as the only formal leader, to carry this out. Despite improvements in the way the school tracks pupils' progress, there are a few gaps in the information that is collected centrally, making it more difficult for the school to accurately judge its overall success. Nevertheless, weaknesses are followed up and the impact from this can be seen, for example, in the good range of new approaches to improve pupils' progress in writing. Some of the reports and feedback to staff and governors do not sufficiently highlight those aspects in need of improvement, making it difficult for the governing body to hold the school to account. The governors have worked strenuously to support the headteacher in implementing ambitious plans for major building works, but circumstances beyond their control have thwarted them and these plans are currently on hold. However, more modest plans are now well advanced to improve the outdoor area in the EYFS.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Four of the five children in the EYFS were admitted one week before the inspection. They are in a class comprised mainly of pupils in Years 1 and 2. They have settled quickly into a caring and stimulating environment and are already moving confidently around the room, learning to share with, listen to and play alongside others, demonstrating good personal development. It is too early to comment on the progress of these children. The newly appointed teacher has introduced effective and detailed systems for her and her assistant to observe and record the children's progress. The school has no records of entry points and progress of those children admitted last year, but standards by the end of the year were average in all six areas of learning. Despite some good activities and experiences, the overall provision is satisfactory, as is the

leadership. Until recently, there has been slow progress in improving the outdoor provision. The temporary outdoor area is very limited in its scope for children to explore and play independently across all areas of learning. New equipment has been bought and there are detailed plans for a permanent secure and covered area. Within the classroom the children learn well when engaged on a specific activity designed for their age, but at other times learning slows, for example when the teacher is talking to or sharing ideas with the whole class. There are close links with parents, helping ensure good levels of support and welfare for all the children. This is strongly appreciated and valued by the parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress by ensuring teachers more closely match activities to the pupils' wide range of abilities, fully extending all pupils, including those who are more able.
- Strengthen the systems for checking the performance of the school, including the way pupils' progress is monitored centrally and the clarity with which areas found to be in need of improvement are reported to staff and governors.
- Improve the outdoor provision for children in the EYFS.
- Instigate a more formal strategy to develop community cohesion and so improve pupils' understanding of the wider community's cultural diversity.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their 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 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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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

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

16 January 2009

Dear Children,

Inspection of Monkleigh Primary School, Bideford EX39 5JY

Thank you for the way you made us feel very welcome when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with some of you, visiting your classrooms and looking at some of your work. We are pleased you like your school so much. Monkleigh is a satisfactory school with several good features. Here are some of the highlights we found during our visit:

- Your behaviour is excellent. You are exceptionally thoughtful about one another and very polite and helpful as you move around the school.
- You enjoy your lessons and all the other activities at school. You are reliable about coming to school every day and arrive in good time.
- Teachers plan interesting things for you to do and are good at helping you to think about how well you are learning and what you need to practise.
- You know how important it is to stay fit and healthy and enjoy PE and the sports activities on the field.
- Everyone who works at the school takes good care of you, making sure you are safe and helping you to sort out any worries or problems you have. Your parents are very pleased about this.
- Your headteacher is always thinking of ways to improve the school.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on four things to make the school even better:

- Help you make even more progress by ensuring teachers carefully match the activities in all lessons to your different needs so that your work is neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Improve the way the school checks up on how well everything is working and clearly reports what needs to improve.
- Improve the outdoor facilities and area for the Reception children in Class 1.
- Make sure the school helps you to learn more about the full range of people's beliefs and values across Britain.

I am sure, perhaps through your school council, you will want to talk about ways you can help make the school even better.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Kerly

Lead Inspector