

# Sticklepath Community School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 113169            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Devon             |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 325766            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 4–5 February 2009 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Anne Newall       |

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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary                                    |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community                                  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 5–11                                       |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed                                      |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 304  |
| 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  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body                         |
| <b>Chair</b>   | D Brailey                                  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Toni Carter                                |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 24 November 2005                           |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                   |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                   |
| <b>School address</b>  | Woodville Estate<br>Barnstaple<br>EX31 2HH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01271 342455                               |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01271 324649                               |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Sticklepath is a larger than average school, serving a relatively disadvantaged part of Barnstaple. The school has very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and all pupils speak English. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average. The school has a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than most schools. The school works in close partnership with external agencies, including the onsite children's centre and pre-school, and the local police community support officer, to the benefit of the local community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Sticklepath is a satisfactory school with some key strengths. This school lies at the heart of its community. It enjoys excellent relationships with parents and has been successful in promoting the good personal development and well-being of its pupils. The school has a real community feel and has worked hard to build its deservedly improving reputation. Pupils enjoy school and have many friends. One parent said, 'My daughter loves school... it's hard to keep her home at the weekends!' and another wrote, '... sometimes he wishes he could be here all the time.' Pupils feel safe because staff show genuine concern for their welfare. Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very supportive of the school. They expressed their appreciation of the approachability of staff and of the individual attention given to their children. One parent described Sticklepath as 'a very happy school' and another feels it is 'a fab school'.

In the past, some parents living close to the school have sent their children to neighbouring schools but recent indications are that, as the school has improved its reputation, this picture is changing. Previously, children began school with skills and abilities that were below or well below expectations for their age. However, in the last two years children have entered school with abilities broadly in line with national expectations in most areas, although still below expectations in communication, language and literacy. Good provision ensures that the children do well in the Reception classes. Despite successes in nurturing pupils, outcomes in terms of national tests have been low compared to national averages. But, in 2008 the Year 6 results rose to broadly average levels in English, mathematics and science. Standards in the current Year 6 indicate an improving picture, although progress remains satisfactory. Recent results in Year 2 were below average but also rising. The recent improvement in standards in both key stages is primarily because the school has given more attention to tracking pupils' progress. However, assessment information is not yet used sufficiently well in each class to plan lessons which meet the needs of all pupils and engage them actively in learning. Pupils' sound basic skills mean that their preparation for the future is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Recent innovations in the curriculum have led to pupils being eager to learn and this, together with marking which helps pupils understand how to improve their work, is beginning to raise standards. Most of the teaching seen by inspectors was good, and strong relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy many extra-curricular activities, including a wide range of interesting visits and visitors, which enrich the curriculum. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively, especially to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, as a result, these pupils make good progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-evaluation is mainly carried out by senior leaders and is focused upon provision rather than the effect of actions on pupils' progress and standards. Governors are supportive and share a wide range of useful talents and experiences. They are well informed about what is happening in school, and have been influential in improving the reputation of the school in the community. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, particularly in improving its facilities and introducing a more creative and inspiring curriculum. It has satisfactory capacity to improve and provides sound value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children settle quickly and happily into school as a result of effective links with the local pre-schools. Staff ensure that care and welfare are given high priority and this means children develop confidently and feel safe and secure. They form positive relationships with one another and work and play together well. They are able to collaborate over tasks, for example holding things for each other to cut in a design and make task. Good use of assessment information, high quality planning and strong support from all adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage team ensure that children make good progress across all areas of learning. However, the role of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader does not include monitoring the work of all members of the team. Although children are currently starting school at levels broadly expected for their age group, by the time they enter Year 1 they are working securely in line with expectations for their age. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning from the outset through the 'starting school' courses. Children become increasingly independent because of the well organised indoor and outdoor learning environments and they maximise their progress when they are given opportunities to select activities for themselves. Initiatives such as 'learning detectives' enable children to form a very positive sense of themselves as learners. They enjoy learning because activities are presented in a fun and child-centred way, for example writing letters to Boris the Bear who had visited the school overnight! The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well and there have been good improvements to the provision. Links with Year 1 staff mean that children are well prepared to move on at the end of the year.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment provides regular information about the progress of each pupil, which is used by all teachers to set challenging targets.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels to improve the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation, giving more attention to the link between provision and its impact on standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, entering Year 1 with abilities in line with expectations for their age. Recent results show that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen, although they remain below average. Current school assessment information shows that pupils in Year 2 are making satisfactory progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 and by the time they leave the school they reach standards which are close to the national average. Changes to the curriculum and teaching styles, designed to motivate and interest the pupils, are beginning to show signs of success in higher standards, but there has not yet been time for these to have a sustained impact upon pupils' year on year progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of careful identification of their needs and the high quality support they are given.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The school is a lively place where teachers have successfully built a culture of learning which pupils enjoy. They like their teachers and are confident that adults listen to them, so they are not troubled by bullying. Behaviour is good in most lessons and generally around the school. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils respect others' feelings and help those having difficulties. The school council is active in representing pupils' views. It nominates charities for fundraising events and has suggested several playground improvements. Cultural development is good, including the arts. Use of the local environment raises pupils' awareness of local traditions, and pupils gain knowledge of other cultures and beliefs through assemblies and topic work. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of diversity within the United Kingdom. All pupils have a good understanding of healthy living. They enjoy many sports including swimming, basketball, football and regular fitness exercises. Basic skills are at a satisfactory level when pupils leave and their preparation for future economic well-being is enhanced by community involvement.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers' high expectations of behaviour and pupils' personal development have sparked the pupils' desire to improve their levels of achievement and this is beginning to result in higher standards. Where teaching is strongest, work is well matched to pupils' needs and fully engages all pupils in learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. Teaching assistants are effective in helping less able pupils to make good progress. In most lessons, pupils are actively involved in learning, and given opportunities to assess their own and others' work. Teachers mark work regularly and sometimes include points for improvement. However, although many teachers know what pupils need to do to progress, this is not consistent across the school. Consequently, pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve. The progress of pupils is slower in lessons where they are not actively engaged in their activities.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Teachers have implemented a more creative and thematic curriculum which is paying dividends by motivating and interesting the pupils. Although still in the early stages of development, links between subject areas are making learning more exciting and relevant. One parent commented, 'My daughter finds school life interesting and fun.' Well targeted tasks and good support help pupils with learning difficulties to progress well and to enjoy full access to all the school does. Pupils now have more opportunities for writing, speaking and listening, and these are beginning to improve their literacy skills. For example, writing about an earthquake began with role play and 'classroom destruction', which really sparked the pupils' interest. Recent developments in information and communication technology (ICT) are also beginning to raise standards. A strength of the school is the wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities which enrich provision. The good programme for personal and social development helps pupils to consider feelings and take responsibility for their actions, and ensures that they know how to be healthy and stay safe.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Pupils feel well looked after because of good relationships with adults throughout the school. The quality of pastoral care and individual support is strong. The high quality support and guidance of the special educational needs coordinator contribute to the good progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are effective strategies for promoting the social well-being of all pupils. The school has worked successfully with parents to encourage a greater partnership in their child's education through initiatives such as family literacy. The school works well with external agencies to provide additional support when needed and has suitable policies for the safeguarding of pupils. Health and safety procedures are also effective. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle well and has achieved the Healthy School Silver Award. Academic guidance and support are satisfactory, but assessment and tracking procedures do not give all staff a sufficiently clear overview of pupils' performance in the long term.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a united team of staff and governors with a common sense of purpose. They have gathered information to contribute to self-evaluation and used this to identify strategies for improvement that are beginning to result in better progress for pupils, for example the emphasis on creativity in the curriculum and 'big writing' in the early years. These have not yet been in place long enough to ensure sustained improvement. Self-evaluation is largely carried out by senior leaders whilst middle leaders are less involved in monitoring, making it difficult for them to track pupils' progress or the impact of initiatives within their subjects.

Links with outside agencies are strong, in particular the partnership with the police community support officer, and the school has a very inclusive nature. Parents speak highly of the school, valuing the caring ethos and approachability of the staff. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Pupils make a good contribution to their local community and the school's engagement in the local community extends to a very popular youth club for teenagers, run by school staff. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and provide good support to the school. They have been particularly effective in promoting the improved reputation of the school in the community.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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?              | 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?  | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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                           | 2 |

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 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  | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 3 |
| 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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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   | 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  | 3   |
| 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**

6 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sticklepath Community Primary School, Barnstaple EX31 2HH

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school this week. We think we were lucky that the snow didn't prevent us from visiting you!

We enjoyed seeing you in your lessons, as well as outside playing once the snow had melted. You were very polite and chatty during the meeting one of the inspectors had with you and when we came to see you working in class. It is clear that you like your headteacher and the other staff, who do a good job of caring for you in school. Because the work you do is interesting you enjoy coming to school and you behave well. Many of you told us that you like the practical activities, such as Forest School, and that you think your school has good facilities.

We have judged your school to be satisfactory, and improving. To improve your school even more, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- check more carefully how well you are doing in your work, so that they can give you targets which will help you to make more progress
- involve all the teachers in checking that the changes they make in school help to raise your standards.

You can help by talking to your teachers about your work and what you need to do to make it better, and by trying hard to achieve the targets they set for you.

Good luck for your future, and once again thank you for welcoming us to your school.

Yours faithfully

Anne Newall

Lead inspector