

Watcombe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113233
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	325776
Inspection dates	6–7 May 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	239
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	15
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Salter
Headteacher	Adam Morris
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Moor Lane Torquay TQ2 8NU
Telephone number	01803 327419
Fax number	01803 322172

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Watcombe is an average-sized school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and none are at the early stage of learning English. An above average number of pupils join or leave the school each year in most year groups. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average, and the majority have moderate learning difficulties. The current level of pupils with a statement of special educational need is above the national average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made through the school's own nursery. The school also shares accommodation with a privately run nursery and children's centre. The school provides before school care for specific groups of children across the primary age range.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Watcombe Primary is a highly regarded, well led and happy school that provides a good education for all its pupils. The following comments, written by parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, reflect the views of the overwhelming majority of parents who support the school and are happy with their children's learning and progress. 'I think that the school provides fantastic care for the children.' 'The school goes to great lengths to make sure that children are included in all activities.' 'The staff are a visible presence in the school and are always approachable and listen to parents' concerns and views.'

At the centre of this continually improving school is an effective and well-respected headteacher, ably supported by his deputy and senior leadership team. Together they are systematically dismantling the barriers that often hinder many pupils' development and learning. This caring ethos is clearly demonstrated through the outstanding pastoral care and guidance that are real strengths of the school. From the very first contact with families, supportive and thorough assessment strategies are introduced to ensure all pupils settle quickly to learning. The resulting information is used to monitor pupils' progress, and provide additional support where necessary. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to improve in lessons. Vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported and many make outstanding progress.

It is no surprise to find that most pupils really enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is good. Pupils also say they feel very safe in school and are confident that any concerns will be listened to and dealt with promptly. Attendance is only satisfactory because a small minority of children do not arrive on time in the mornings or attend as regularly as they should. However, the school has strengthened systems to promote attendance, which has improved significantly in the past year.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding because lessons stimulate pupils' interests, are well planned and provide well for their individual learning needs. A well-balanced curriculum ensures an appropriate focus on basic skills as well as offering many opportunities to participate in a wide variety of exciting activities, many of which are on offer after school. However, the curriculum does not currently provide enough opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity of Britain as a multicultural society.

The majority of children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age, and in Key Stage 1, standards have remained low in recent years. A focus on skills to support learning and the rigorous use of assessment data to inform lesson planning are now helping the school to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the majority of pupils in Key Stage 1 are now making good overall progress in learning these key skills. This recent improvement has yet to have an impact on standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2, which remain broadly average. This represents good achievement overall, but the school is aware that pupils' relatively weak reading skills in Key Stage 1 have an impact on their learning in all subjects, and is rightly ensuring that reading remains a focus area.

The school is led and managed well. Leaders have worked systematically to ensure all staff work together as a team, focused on providing high quality care and education for all pupils. The governing body offers satisfactory support and challenge to the school. It is in the process of developing a more strategic role in supporting school improvement. The good progress made

by the school since the last inspection demonstrates its continued good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership ensures that the safety and welfare of children are given high priority. The well-resourced and vibrant learning environment encourages pupils to explore and learn independently, both inside and outside the classroom. All staff work closely and successfully together to promote children's welfare.

Parents are extremely pleased with how well their children settle into school life. This is because of the excellent links with parents and pre-school providers to make starting school as seamless and smooth as possible for all children. Central to this outstanding provision is the way assessment is used effectively to inform planning and the next steps in children's learning. Every opportunity is made to involve parents and carers in this process. This essential focus on the learning needs of individuals, linked with stimulating teaching and learning experiences, captivates children's imaginations and ensures all children enjoy their learning and attain good levels of achievement, often from low starting points. A particular strength is the excellent phonics teaching, which is having a positive impact on improving literacy and language skills. As a result, the majority of children are well prepared to meet the challenges of Key Stage 1. Leaders are aware, however, that children's numeracy skills are not as well developed and are focusing on the development of these skills in order to bring them securely in line with national expectations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the current upward trend in attainment in KS1 is maintained for English and mathematics.
- Develop the school's contribution to community cohesion by promoting pupils' better understanding of Britain as a multicultural society.
- Raise attendance levels among the few pupils who are persistently late or absent.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From low starting points, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science, reaching standards that are broadly average by the time they leave school. Overall this represents good achievement. Standards for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics have been exceptionally low until recently. However, due to a timely and appropriate focus on key literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school, pupils' progress in the past year has significantly improved. Performance data now suggest that pupils are well on their way to achieving their challenging targets by the end of this summer term. The good progress seen, particularly in older year groups, is a result of the consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching provided throughout the school. The school's effective assessment procedures, supported by very good care and welfare strategies, ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have every opportunity to make good, and often outstanding, progress in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy school and show very positive attitudes towards their learning. 'We know we are going to have fun in lessons!' and, 'Teachers help us to learn something new every day!' are typical of comments made by pupils. Parents too confirm this in their questionnaire responses. Rewards for attending regularly are ensuring attendance rates are steadily improving and are now satisfactory. Rigorous checks are carried out on all pupils who are late or absent. However, despite the school's best efforts, a few parents do not ensure their children arrive on time or attend regularly.

Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of right and wrong, and how to behave safely. At break times, well-trained peer mentors help to maintain high standards of behaviour. By Year 6, pupils are developing an excellent commitment to health through eating sensibly and taking regular exercise. Pupils' good progress in developing their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, along with their good social skills, prepares them well for the next stage of their education and later life.

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good. They contribute to their local community well and have a good grasp of other countries and their cultures. However, their understanding of living in Britain as a multicultural society is less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, teaching and learning are mostly good. In some outstanding lessons, where high expectations and well-planned teaching exist, pupils make rapid progress. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, including subject-specific vocabulary, ensures high levels of enthusiasm, enjoyment and participation from all children. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, children were able to work collaboratively and demonstrate a good understanding of the properties of light by producing a poster to aid them in their revision. Where teaching is weaker, the pace of the lesson is too slow and pupils have limited opportunities to participate in their learning. Questioning is used well in lessons to check pupils' understanding. Teachers use assessment data effectively to identify any groups that are underachieving. Many books are marked regularly to provide pupils with helpful feedback, but this is not consistent practice in all classes. The excellent support provided by well-trained teaching assistants, through individual and small group work, is a real strength of the school and a significant reason why many pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, in part because they are provided with a curriculum that interests them and provides for their learning needs. Information and communication technology is integrated effectively throughout the curriculum and is used well by teachers to enhance learning and sustain pupils' interest in lessons. The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for less able pupils in particular to make accelerated progress because of the high levels of support available through intervention. In addition, themed weeks focus activities to

add breadth to the curriculum and also extend more able pupils and those who are gifted or talented. The school uses its excellent partnerships with specialist organisations to further extend support for pupils. More opportunities to learn about the diversity of Britain as a multicultural society have yet to be fully integrated.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A wide range of sensitively developed intervention programmes ensure no child is left behind in accessing opportunities to promote learning. The early start provision, and nurture groups to support the most vulnerable children, are highly valued by teachers, pupils and families. Systematic monitoring of this provision clearly demonstrates the positive impact it has on getting children ready to learn. Assessment data is also used effectively to inform teachers' planning and accelerate pupils' progress in lessons. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and all safeguarding measures are conscientiously conducted. Academic guidance supports pupils' learning effectively. Older pupils in particular talk confidently about their targets and what they need to do next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Through strong and determined leadership, the headteacher has ensured that secure foundations for sustainable success have been built upon since the previous inspection. Under his inspirational leadership and closely supported by the deputy headteacher, all subject leaders and managers fully understand and contribute to the school improvement process. A particular strength of the school has been his effective establishing of a collegiate approach amongst his staff in addressing school improvement issues. In addition, leaders are systematic in the analysis and use of data to inform the strategic development of the school. As a result, challenging yet realistic targets are set and understood by all staff, and this is the key reason for the steady rise in standards throughout the school.

The impact of governance within the school is currently satisfactory. The governors are kept well informed through regular meetings with senior leaders, feedback from working parties and written reports. Recent developments to strengthen their strategic role and to provide more rigorous challenge to the school are in the early stages of implementation. A number of vacancies still remain on the governing body. The school's contribution to community cohesion is in an early stage of development and there is insufficient focus on promoting Britain as a diverse multicultural society.

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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?	2
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	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	1

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	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**

8 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Watcombe Primary School, Torquay TQ2 8NU

Thank you so much for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and valued the opportunities we had to talk with you and see you in your lessons. In return, we want to tell you what we thought of your school. We have decided yours is a good school. Some things about your school are outstanding, such as the way the youngest children get off to a flying start! Those of you who do not always find learning easy also make excellent progress because of your positive attitudes to learning. Well done! The support and guidance your teachers, teaching assistants and support staff provide for you are also excellent. This is because they all care very much not just about raising the standards of your work, but also about ensuring you grow up with personal skills that will help you in the future to enjoy life and contribute to your community.

We were impressed with your enthusiasm for school. You have a very good understanding of what it means to stay healthy through regular exercise and a healthy diet. You are being well prepared for your future lives because your teachers ensure lessons are interesting and fun yet keep a focus on important literacy and numeracy skills. You are also good at caring for one another and finding ways to help others, through fundraising and participating in local competitions. We were particularly impressed with the work that your peer mentors do in helping maintain good behaviour at playtimes.

We have asked the leaders of your school to think of ways they might improve things even more for you in school. In particular, we have asked them to ensure that children make even better progress, through Key Stage 1, in reading, writing and mathematics. We have also asked the school to think of ways to help you understand and appreciate that we all now live in a country that is home to people of many different cultures and nationalities. Finally, a few of you do not arrive at school on time in the mornings or are absent too often. The school is doing all it can to improve attendance but remember, if you are not in school, you are not learning. So, please help your teachers by being at school as regularly as you can.

I wish you every success for your futures,

Yours faithfully

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector