

Morice Town Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113307
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	325793
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye 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)	242
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	51
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Rowe
Headteacher	David Maddison
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Charlotte Street Devonport Plymouth PL2 1RJ
Telephone number	01752 567609
Fax number	01752567609

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Inspection number	325793

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school, which is of average size, is located in the dockland area of Plymouth. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is much higher than average and the area is one with high levels of social need. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A greater number of pupils than average join or leave the school part-way through their primary education. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Reception and Nursery classes and the school has close links with the local Sure Start Children's Centre. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award, Inclusion Kitemark and the bronze Cultural Diversity Quality Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Morice Town provides a good standard of education and care for pupils. It has many strengths and, under the highly effective leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders, is making considerable progress in tackling historically high levels of underachievement. This is because the school has a united 'can do' approach, which has a strong focus on school improvement. A particular strength is the excellent working practices that have been established with external agencies, such as the Excellence Cluster and neighbouring children's centre. This helps to ensure that good quality cohesive support is provided to families and all pupils, especially those who have high levels of social or emotional need or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are fully appreciative of this support: as one commented, 'I am really pleased with the support the school has given to my son and myself'.

Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and understanding well below expected levels for their age. They make good progress, relative to their starting points, although standards at the end of the Reception Year are still below average. In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make good progress, and most achieve average standards, although few exceed this level. Although in the past standards in Key Stage 2 have been below national averages, pupils are now making good progress from low starting points. Standards are improving as a result, although in mathematics progress is slower. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are very well supported.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and in some classes, especially in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage, these are good. A number of whole-school strategies, such as the process of setting targets, have been introduced to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning improves further, but these are better embedded in some classes than in others. Occasionally lessons lack pace and pupils' progress is slower as a result. The school recognises this and is providing appropriate support to teachers and this is beginning to have a positive impact on learning. The curriculum is good because it is well designed to meet the very specific needs of the pupils and helps to promote positive attitudes towards learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils behave well and they say that they feel very safe and valued in school. They appreciate the strong emphasis that is placed on celebrating diversity and pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. Although attendance is below the national average, the school has worked with commendable diligence and this has improved as a result. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The provision for pastoral support and care of pupils and their families is very good. However, although there are good systems in place to provide pupils with guidance on how to achieve their individual learning targets, these are better applied in some classes than in others, so the quality of academic guidance, for example in the marking of pupils' work, is variable.

Leadership and management are good because the school knows itself well, is successfully tackling its weaker areas and has put in place effective plans for future improvement. As a result of this, and the actions taken in the past to address areas of underachievement, the school demonstrates a good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for the youngest children is good. Most start school with skills well below those expected for their age, particularly in linking letters with sounds, reading and calculating number. In these areas they make good progress although they are still below average at the end of the Reception Year. The children's social and emotional development is good and they are actively encouraged to take part in, and make sensible decisions about, their own learning. During the inspection this was demonstrated when the children were changing for physical education (PE) and making choices about healthy eating at snack time. Both Nursery and Reception classes are well resourced and good use is made of the available space to support learning, although the school is rightly planning to reorganise the outside area for the Reception class.

Caring and well-qualified staff provide a good level of welfare support which leads to the children's good personal development and well-being. Children behave well and respond sensibly to opportunities to work independently or with others. Excellent links exist between outside agencies and parents, who are actively encouraged to be involved in their child's learning, for example, by contributing to the 'Wow' statements which celebrate and record children's achievements at home as well as in school.

Teaching is well planned because the staff team has a good understanding of children's learning and development needs and uses ongoing assessment well to plan suitable activities. For example, a 'bear hunt' successfully enthused the children and provided very good opportunities to develop oral and social skills.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well. There is a very clear understanding of where improvements are needed and suitable actions are in place to address these priorities. Building closer links with Key Stage 1 and further developing child-initiated activities are examples of recent initiatives which are having a positive impact on the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure the pace of lessons throughout the school is as good as the best so that pupils consistently make good progress.
- Ensure that the positive developments in marking and the process of setting targets are consistently applied throughout the school so that all pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school is tackling a history of underachievement and there is clear evidence that newly introduced whole-school strategies are starting to have a very positive impact on raising standards. Many pupils start school, either in the Nursery or Reception classes, or in older classes, with standards well below average, but most make good progress relative to their starting points.

In Key Stage 1, a very strong focus on teaching phonics has resulted in good progress being made in reading and writing. From below average starting points, by the end of Year 2 most pupils are achieving average levels in these areas and in mathematics, but few exceed them.

In the past, the national test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average. However, the school's own assessment data, confirmed by inspection evidence, suggest that progress this year is much improved, particularly in English. In mathematics, progress has been slower so standards are lower, but here, too, there are clear indications of improvement.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress relative to their starting points. This is because their specific needs, whether social, emotional or educational, are accurately identified early in their time at the school. Very well planned intervention strategies, which actively encourage families and outside agencies to work closely with the school, provide good support for such pupils and, as a result, their needs are met very effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the pupils is good: as one parent commented, 'Everyone is so very warm and friendly'; and another said, 'The school has surpassed all expectations'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and appreciate the numerous opportunities for sport and exercise. They have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and even the youngest pupils are aware of the risks of overexposure to the sun. Pupils are well behaved and rare instances of challenging behaviour, racism or bullying are dealt with appropriately. Pupils say that they enjoy school and although attendance is still below the national average, the school monitors this rigorously and has put in place very effective strategies, such as employing a parent support adviser, to reduce absences and the number of late arrivals. As a result, attendance is improving.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. They take their responsibilities as playground monitors or members of the school council seriously and the annual school plays are highly valued by the community. Although literacy and numeracy standards are below average, the school provides imaginative and well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology (ICT) and other workplace skills and experiences. For example, pupils have to apply in writing and are interviewed for the job of playground monitor.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and in some classes they are good or better. All teaching features excellent relationships between adults and pupils, good management of behaviour and well-planned and exciting activities which result in high levels of enjoyment by pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils enthusiastically engaged in a discussion about a survey of car colours that they had undertaken. Throughout the school, work is well matched to the varying needs of pupils, and teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to teaching and learning, especially through intervention groups to support pupils who struggle in their learning. Teachers make good use of questioning to assess the progress and understanding of pupils, and in many lessons planning reflects pupils' prior learning. However, in some lessons teachers spend too long on explaining tasks and in others pupils lose concentration and the lesson subsequently lacks pace. In yet other lessons, opportunities are

missed to use ongoing assessment strategies to ensure that all pupils understand what they are being taught, so they do not make as much progress as they should. The school is aware of this issue and is providing suitable monitoring and support to address it.

Teaching and learning are supported by appropriate systems to set individual learning targets, but, because these are relatively new and are not yet fully embedded, the effectiveness with which these are applied varies. At best, pupils are clear about the areas that they need to improve and this is helping them to assess their own progress, but where the targets are presented in language which is too advanced for them, some pupils are unclear about what their targets are or how to achieve them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it has been imaginatively designed to meet the needs of pupils. English and mathematics plans have recently been reviewed and the development of a curriculum which engages all pupils, for example in reading and writing, is starting to have a positive impact on progress and achievement, particularly with boys. The ICT curriculum is well developed and is enhanced by a personalised award system. There are effective cross-curricular links which encourage enjoyment and a positive attitude towards learning. For example, pupils were very excited by a day spent exploring through role play, creativity and music, the experience of being an evacuee in the Second World War. Excellent enrichment activities such as a Royal Tournament-style field gun race, themed book weeks and drama events, and numerous extra-curricular activities all enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care and support of pupils is excellent, but academic guidance varies in quality. The school works very effectively with parents and outside agencies such as the Excellence Cluster and the education welfare officer to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met and that all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are happy, settled and make progress. All safeguarding requirements are in place and rigorously applied. Effective systems to ensure that pupils receive helpful guidance about how to improve their work are in place, although there are inconsistencies about how they are applied with regard to the marking of pupils' work. At best, marking provides clear advice to pupils about what needs to improve and how, and encourages them to assess their own learning. However, this is not consistent across the school and sometimes marking does not respond with appropriate comments to poor quality work or does not provide clear enough guidance on how it can be improved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Under the highly effective leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the school has gone a long way towards addressing a history of underachievement, and there is a unified approach towards improving the school and raising standards, which is beginning to bear fruit. The school evaluates itself well and is fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, appropriately challenging whole-school targets are set and action planning to achieve them is well conceived. A particular strength of

the school is the way in which it promotes equality of opportunity for everyone within the school community and operates an effective zero tolerance approach toward discrimination. As a result, the school has a harmonious atmosphere which values and celebrates diversity. Community cohesion is strong, especially at a local and global level, although the school recognises the need to further develop pupils' understanding of differing communities within Britain. Governors are well led and support the school well. However, because a number of them are new to the role, their confidence in providing informed challenge to the school is an area that they recognise needs further development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	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?	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?	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?	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	1
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

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?	2
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?	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?	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	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**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morice Town Primary School, Plymouth PL2 1RJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school this week. We really enjoyed chatting to you and the grown-ups, looking at your work and sharing your lessons. We thought that you were very polite and well behaved. Well done!

I am sure that you will be keen to hear what we thought of your school. We think that yours is a good school which works really well with lots of people and groups in the community, including your parents, to make sure that you are well cared for and get a good quality education. You behave well both in class and around school and you told us that you feel safe and that you enjoy coming to school. You have a really good understanding about how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. The standard of your work is below average, particularly in mathematics, but this is improving and most of you are making good progress, especially in English. Well done! Your school is brilliant at making sure that everyone has a chance to succeed and works really hard to try to improve the standards of your work. This is working well in reading and writing, but there is still a way to go in mathematics.

Even a good school can be better, and we have suggested that the school should focus on three areas so that it can continue to improve.

- Improve standards in mathematics, especially in older classes.
- Make sure that all the lessons have a pace as good as the best so that everyone makes good progress.
- Make sure that you understand your targets and that the good marking that some of you are given in your books is given to everyone.

You can help by making sure that you attend school every day. Some of you find this a bit difficult, but teachers cannot teach you if you are not in school!

Have a wonderful summer holiday, when it comes, and good luck for the future!

Yours faithfully

Chris Nye

Her Majesty's Inspector