

Branscombe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	113348
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325798
Inspection date	14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	50
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	Nicholas Edwards
Headteacher	Katie Gray
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Branscombe Seaton EX12 3DA
Telephone number	01297 680339
Fax number	01297 680549

Age group	4–11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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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:

progress in writing, speaking and listening and whether achievement is even across all years
pupils' understanding of their progress and how independent they are as learners
aspects of assessment.

The inspectors gathered evidence on the day from discussions with staff, pupils, governors and others. A range of school documentation was examined and first-hand evidence was gathered from observing pupils in lessons and at play. Parents' views were gathered from questionnaires completed prior to the inspection and through talking to some at the start of the day.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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

This is a very small rural school with three mixed-age classes. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Reception class in either September or January and a breakfast club is provided. The roll is falling because larger year groups at the higher end of the school are being replaced with smaller numbers of younger pupils. The school is located on a severely limited site with very small play areas. Numerous absences amongst a very small staff recently have necessitated an unusually high proportion of supply and cover teaching, with one of the three classes covered by a supply teacher for the day of inspection. The school holds awards for Basic Skills, as a Healthy School, Silver awards as an Eco School and for its Travel Plan, an Active Schools Mark and as an Investor in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their academic work and their personal development is outstanding. Numbers are very small so standards vary year on year, but when they start school, children's skills are broadly as expected for those of a similar age. They leave with excellent social awareness and high levels of confidence and maturity. From their earliest experience in Reception, pupils gain great benefits from working with pupils of different ages in their classes.

Challenging targets have been met or exceeded recently and current standards match those in recent Year 6 groups, which have been significantly above average. Pupils therefore move on with very secure basic skills to prepare them for future learning. Progress in writing has improved, as has pupils' competence in speaking and listening. Standards at Year 2 have been average, but younger pupils' achievement is accelerating, following a new staff appointment. Good additional support for vulnerable pupils, such as those with English as an additional language or with learning difficulties, enables them to achieve as well as others.

A particular strength is pupils' excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, especially the links between these aspects and sustainable living and environmental issues. The rural location alone is ideal to reinforce this understanding, but the school maximises these advantages well through its interesting curriculum and enrichment opportunities, such as the active Eco-club and excellent use of the school's allotment. Pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is more limited and the school acknowledges the need to extend this experience.

Teaching and learning are good and staff know all pupils very well, making sure that their extensive contributions to school and community life are respected and valued. Pupils feel safe because staff provide a high level of pastoral care and individual support or challenge where needed.

A significant number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, particularly those of older pupils, expressed disquiet about changes to staffing and the structure of class groupings as numbers on roll fall. The school and its advisors are striving to manage this as effectively as possible, but governors recognise that recent advance speculation has derailed their plans to communicate with parents as well as they would have wished. Other parents are extremely supportive of the school, confirming inspection findings that recent improvements, particularly to EYFS and Years 1/2 provision, have helped their children settle quickly and make good progress.

Pupils speak articulately about their enjoyment of school, a view which almost all parents endorse, even where they express other misgivings. Staff and governors recognise that the need for supply and cover teaching resulting from staff absence for training or medical necessities, sometimes disturbs learning, but the school does its best to minimise this. Parents overwhelmingly appreciate the good progress their children make in Years 5/6 and the solid preparation they have for their experience in secondary schools. Measures to rectify an identified dip in progress in Years 3/4 have been successful, and improved tracking now shows that achievement has evened out across the school. The accuracy of assessment, about which the school had concerns at Key Stage 1, has improved. Pupils' 'progress books' show good development of key skills, with standards properly assessed, but most assessment does not involve pupils sufficiently well in understanding how they can help themselves to move forward. Marking, for instance, does not usually inform pupils about specific targets, so their

understanding of how they can improve in the short term is limited. Good use of partnerships with other organisations overcome difficulties such as those imposed by restricted accommodation and space. Sports opportunities, for instance, are well extended by using the nearby village hall and sports coaches from a partner school. The governing body's relatively inexperienced members are very keen to take up available training opportunities and eager to support the school. Self-evaluation is good, with school judgements matching those found on inspection. Positive relationships with the school's improvement partner and with the local authority are helping to steer staff through prevailing turbulent times. The school rightly judges its leadership and management as satisfactory, recognising strengths and assessing accurately areas which require improvement, such as aspects of governance and relationships with some parents. With its new governing body, improved EYFS and Key Stage 1 provision, and a track record of sustaining good achievement from the previous inspection, the school has good capacity to develop further.

Statutory aspects of monitoring and evaluation, such as observations of teaching for performance management, are carried out properly, but the school lacks a rigorous method of monitoring the quality of teaching of all staff. Insufficient identification of strengths and weaknesses in teaching provides an insubstantial basis upon which to build a common school-wide programme to improve learning. Recent reorganisation of the small staff into teams with responsibility for different areas of learning is usefully distributing accountability more widely, but it is too early to judge its effects.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in EYFS is good and is improving. Children achieve well and make good progress from starting points which are typical of children of this age. They develop well as happy independent learners, gaining enormous benefit from working and playing with older pupils in their class. Language skills, for instance, are developing well through interactions with Year 1/2 pupils who happily help to extend the vocabulary of these young classmates. A spacious indoor classroom and well-sheltered outdoor space provide a stimulating learning environment which caters well for all areas of the curriculum. Resources are good and children enjoy their learning, supporting and encouraging each other to do their best. Staff take every opportunity to develop and challenge children further, using all aspects of the EYFS learning programmes effectively indoors and outside. They ensure that children are safe and the school complies with statutory requirements. Leadership and management of EYFS are good and the new manager of this phase is continuing to improve provision. Staff work well as a team, balancing the needs of these younger children effectively with other demands in this mixed age environment. Progress for EYFS pupils is speeding up and staff are skilled at assessing and recording children's individual achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement a programme to monitor and evaluate teaching across the school and identify improvements needed to increase learning.
- Involve all staff in developing individual short-term target setting so that pupils understand the next steps in learning and how they can help to achieve these.

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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?	2
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	2
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?	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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**

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Branscombe CE Primary School, Seaton EX12 3DA

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school when we came for the inspection. It was a pleasure to be there and to be in your classes, talk to some of you and to look at your work. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

- Yours is a good school where you progress well in your work. We were particularly pleased to see how outstandingly well you develop personally, as mature, sensible young people. You work and play together very well, especially with children of different ages, helping and supporting each other.
- Your standards are high by the time you leave the school, so you possess good skills levels when you move on to your next schools. We found that the progress of younger pupils is speeding up.
- Some of your parents are concerned about what will happen when there are fewer pupils in school, but we found that staff, governors and other adults are preparing as well as they should for the future.
- Teaching is good, so you learn lots of interesting things very well. We were particularly impressed with your understanding of healthy lifestyles, environmental issues and how you and your teachers use your allotment and the surrounding countryside and coastline to make work interesting and enjoyable.

Even in a good school, there are things which would make it better still, so we have asked the school to do the following:

- We have asked adults to observe more lessons so they can identify what would make your learning even better.
- We feel that you could be more involved in understanding your targets, especially older pupils, to know exactly how you can help yourselves to reach these and improve your own work more independently.

We feel you can help the school to do these things because you have very sensible and mature attitudes and really enjoy learning.

Thank you again.

Yours faithfully

Janet Simms

Lead inspector