

# Dartington Church of England Primary School and Nursery

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113394
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	325809
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wiola Hola 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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	363
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>	Mary Stidston
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jill Mahon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2006
<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>	Shinners Bridge Dartington Totnes TQ9 6JD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 862357

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 July 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	325809

**Fax number**

01803 866872

<b>Age group</b>	3-11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1-2 July 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is much larger than average. The Early Years Foundation Stage, comprising Nursery and Reception classes, is situated on the Brimhay site, 10 minutes walk from the main school buildings. The school serves the local village, though many pupils come from further away through parental choice. Nearly 90% of pupils are from White British backgrounds and the rest are from a wide range of other backgrounds including some from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below average and the proportion eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but the percentage with statements of special educational needs is well above average. A far higher than average proportion of pupils leave and join the school at other than the usual times. The school has had four headteachers or acting headteachers in the last three years. The current headteacher took up her permanent appointment in September 2008.

The school runs breakfast- and some after-school clubs. In addition, an after-school club is run by an external provider. Links exist with a nearby special and a secondary school. The school has several awards including: Investor in People, the platinum level of the Eco-Schools Award, Healthy School Status, and a Platinum Award for the Travel Plan. It is in the process of being rebuilt on virtually the same site. The new school is expected to be ready in spring 2010.

## 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 an inclusive and innovative school. It gives pupils a wide range of rich and valuable experiences that result in their great enjoyment in learning. Overall achievement is currently satisfactory but pupils' progress is being speeded up through good teaching. The school has some good features that pupils and the vast majority of parents value greatly. Much good work is done to develop well pupils' personal qualities and to enable them to grow as confident, polite, considerate, creative and articulate young people.

Standards by the end of Year 6 have been at or above national averages for several years. They dipped significantly in 2009 in English and mathematics. Progress in science was very low in 2008. The drop in standards, and also in the rate of pupils' progress over the last two years, is linked primarily to changes in leadership that have unsettled the school to some degree. Standards have been restored to broadly average in most parts of the school because of the staff's efforts. More can be expected from pupils at this school in terms of their academic outcomes and the headteacher and her staff are very clear about this. They are working effectively to raise standards whilst ensuring that the school's existing strengths are undiminished. Leadership and management are good and have improved greatly in the last year through the highly effective work of the headteacher.

Teaching and learning are good overall but have some inconsistencies. Most, but not all teachers, keep a close check on the extent of pupils' understanding, provide tasks at an appropriate level of challenge, and put in the right support when pupils need it. Activities in most lessons interest pupils greatly and pupils work hard, behave well and co-operate with each other and staff. Pupils are often encouraged to think deeply, pose questions and make decisions. They are not, however, frequently called upon to evaluate their own work or that of others, or to set for themselves the next step, goal or challenge and this can sometimes restrict their progress.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good because senior staff have a clear overview of each pupil's attainment and individual needs. These needs are largely met, often through tailor-made approaches or interventions. The school has worked successfully to improve attendance but it is still below average and in some cases poor, with a negative impact on some pupils' progress.

The school community is excited about the impending move to new buildings but many members say they will miss the much loved and charming collection of admittedly old buildings, set in woodland, with a stream running through the site. Equally missed will be the delightful accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's current settings contribute greatly to pupils' appreciation of nature and allow for much flexibility in teaching and learning styles.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision is good and enables children to make good progress in all six areas of learning. Improvements since the last inspection have resulted in: good joint planning across the three classes; children being able to make choices from a wide range of interesting activities, appropriate for the different ages; and strengthened provision for the development of children's communication, language and literacy skills. However there is still more that can be done, especially for those children whose vocabulary, communication or social skills are relatively

weak on joining the school. Many children in the current Reception class have reached or exceeded the expected learning goals for their ages and this represents improved outcomes.

Children are happy and safe. Most children behave and co-operate very well and those few who are a little boisterous are kept calm by the gentle promptings of teachers and teaching assistants. Children become progressively independent and confident learners; nursery children often work alongside the older ones and learn from them. Staff successfully encourage children to explore and be creative, and help them to develop early literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching assistants, as well as teachers, are clear about what learning can be drawn from each of the planned activities and note children's achievements. Most tasks are resourced well and capture children's interest. Facilities are good. Opportunities for physical development are excellent, particularly in the lovely and well-used outside areas that include a swimming pool. Parents are mostly very positive about their child's experiences although a few would like to have more information about progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with temporary arrangements in place arising from recent changes in staff roles and responsibilities. Transition to Year 1 is generally satisfactory but could be stronger to allow for a smoother experience for children and enhanced continuity of learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise further pupils' standards and achievements in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by keeping an even closer watch on the progress each pupil makes and putting specific interventions in place as, and if, required.
- Develop further teachers' expertise in exploring, through pertinent questioning and other ways, exactly how well children and pupils are grasping new concepts and skills, so as to ensure that tasks set are always at the right level of challenge and interest.
- Give pupils a greater sense of their achievements, academic and personal, so that a greater proportion of them are clear about what they are aiming for and about their next steps in learning.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils who miss a significant proportion of school time. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 3**

There have been some fluctuations in standards and achievement in the last few years. Test results in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have generally been below average. Standards, as seen in the end of Year 6 tests, were maintained at broadly average, and sometimes above average levels, for several years, although science results were below average in 2008 and progress in science was very low. Test results in Year 6, albeit provisional, dropped markedly in 2009, and were below the targets set. This drop is linked partially to the specific nature of the current cohort of Year 6 pupils but also to a decline in the rate of progress that these and other pupils have made in recent years. The decline is being reversed. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress throughout the school and standards are generally in line with those expected for pupils' ages. Moreover, the proportion of pupils reaching levels that are above expectations is increasing.

The school's close attention to the needs of pupils, higher expectations of what each one can achieve, and a good range of specific provision for them, are resulting in a narrowing of the gap in the rates of progress between different individuals, although some wide gaps still exist. In some cases, poor attendance is a factor in pupils' underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from Traveller families generally make the same progress as their peers, and some make better progress.

Some fine work was seen during the inspection in music. Displays around the school show the many ways in which pupils' creative skills are encouraged and fostered. Pupils are confident users of computers and these are used often to support learning. Since the last inspection, handwriting and presentation of work have improved, in the main, and particularly for younger pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school fosters it so well. Pupils' understanding of the beliefs and values of different groups grows well even though the school is not ethnically diverse, although more could be done to extend this understanding. This inclusive school, in which a wide range of special educational needs exists amongst pupils, succeeds in enabling pupils to work alongside each other supportively, and play harmoniously. Pupils know how to lead safe and healthy lives; they value the healthy meals served. They are helped to manage risky situations, through the 'Forest School' activities for example. They learn to care about the environment, themselves and others. Pupils' behaviour is good and only sometimes do teachers have to deal with minor disruptions that occur usually because tasks set lack interest. Pupils are confident to express their views and are encouraged to do so. The school council, however, is at a relatively early stage of development and still relies considerably on staff support to manage its affairs. Pupils contribute well to the local and wider community in many ways. Pupils' personal qualities of hard work, enthusiasm, collaboration, as well as their generally sound skills in literacy and numeracy equip them well for their next stages in life and learning.

Attendance has been improved in the last year although it is still below average. In addition, the percentage of pupils that are persistent absentees has been considerably reduced but continues to be above average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

In the last year, teachers have placed a closer and necessary focus on ensuring that pupils make as much progress in their academic work as they do in their personal development. Some parents applaud this whilst a few are concerned that a proper balance has not been or may not be achieved. Inspectors found that teachers and teaching assistants are managing that balance well, blending work and activities skilfully so as to promote all aspects of pupils' growth in lessons and at other times. Pupils learn with enjoyment and in a variety of interesting and creative ways because teachers' good planning allows for this in most lessons. Teaching is generally good, sometimes satisfactory, and only very occasionally has shortcomings that result in inadequate progress in a lesson. Most teaching explains new ideas and concepts clearly, demonstrates problem-solving strategies or guides pupils' thinking very effectively, and keeps

a close check on how well pupils are learning. In some lessons, not quite enough is done to question the extent of pupils' understanding, to probe for any misconceptions, or to gather pupils in small groups for specific and guided work. Sometimes, work set is too easy or does not fully engage the pupils. Wherever possible, teaching allows pupils to make decisions about how to proceed with tasks, thus encouraging independence. More could be done to enable pupils to reflect on their own achievements and next steps in learning, through marking or other means. Learning is much enhanced because of some specialist teaching, in music for example, that adds greatly to school life.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school curriculum is rich, exiting, supported well with a wide range of resources, and is praised by the vast majority of parents. Through well-planned themes, such as 'Changes', pupils cover elements of English, mathematics and science and also address personal, social and emotional issues. There is, however, scope to make greater use of work in some subjects to boost pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school's unique and delightful outdoor environment is used well for many areas of learning. 'Forest School' learning, including residential experiences, complements other ways of working. School productions, music performances, a wide range of clubs, visiting professionals or volunteers all enhance the curriculum. Pupils enjoy the well-run breakfast- and after-school clubs. Much good work has taken place this year to extend provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and many good activities already exist, with good collaboration with external agencies and with the nearby special school. Good work is also being undertaken to extend opportunities for the more-able pupils. Pupils enjoy the opportunities for swimming and other sports but some bemoan the lack of a school football team.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school works very effectively to identify the needs of individual pupils. It provides a high level of personal care and aims to ensure the right educational provision for each one. Partnerships with parents and external agencies are strong and result in good collaboration over such efforts and with much success. All statutory policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of children are in place, are applied, and reviewed regularly. The school has an extensive range of measures to improve attendance and these are bearing fruit. Pupils feel that the school's systems of 'white slips' is fair and encourages good behaviour and attitudes. They also value meeting in family groups, known as 'Forest Families', that bring pupils together across the age range. As the school asserts, this supports pupils in recognising, empathising and respecting a range of needs across the school.

Slippage in the rate of pupils' progress that occurred in the last few years is being rectified because systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have been greatly enhanced. Identification of pupils at risk of underachieving is good. Some supportive intervention programmes are in place for specific groups of pupils. Pupils do not generally have a great deal of information about their next steps in learning.



## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The experienced, supportive and resolute headteacher, with a strong team of senior leaders and her staff, has maintained the strengths of the school, and instilled greater rigour into systems for raising standards and achievement. A lot has been achieved over the last year to arrest a recent decline in standards and achievement. Not only that, a clear vision has been set for the school's future in the knowledge and belief that the pupils at Dartington are capable of more than they are currently achieving, in both their personal and academic development. This vision is based on a thorough understanding of what is already successful and what needs to be improved. The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, parents and governors as having the energy, enthusiasm and leadership and management skills to steer this school forward successfully. The school's capacity to improve is good. Partnerships with parents and other agencies are good. A parents' council makes a valuable contribution to school life and its developments. Parents are mostly very appreciative of the school's work but a few feel that communication could be improved, generally, and in relation to understanding better their child's progress.

Senior staff have a very good grasp of pupils' performance. They use data well to set high expectations of pupils' achievements. Such use of data by class teachers is more variable. Whilst most teaching takes good account of pupils' prior attainment to devise suitably challenging tasks, this is not consistently the case. Staff are committed to developing their skills and expertise and are rightly aiming to seek and share best practice to lift the overall quality of educational provision.

One of the school's strengths is in its work to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. Through its highly inclusive approaches, links with local schools, and especially the neighbouring special school, pupils learn to appreciate and value differences. Some good work takes place to promote community cohesion and further work is planned.

Governors are well informed, supportive and also challenging. They have steered the school through a period of changes in leadership. They have worked effectively to maintain the aging school buildings and to plan for the new school accommodation.

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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	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?	3

### 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	3

<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	2

## The quality of provision

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

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

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dartington Church of England Primary School, Dartington, Devon, TQ9 6JD

Thank you for your warm welcome when inspectors visited your school recently. I write to let you know our views about your school which is well led and managed by the headteacher, staff and governors.

The school has enabled you to make satisfactory progress. It has some good features that you and your parents value greatly. It supports you in growing as confident, polite, considerate, creative and articulate young people. You work hard and are well behaved. Instances of disruptions in lessons are very rare. You feel very safe in school and you are well care for and supported. You told us you appreciate the healthy school lunches and the many sporting activities. Many of you spoke about the 'Forest School' and 'Forest Families' that you enjoy. We saw you singing with much enthusiasm in the school hall and at lunchtime outside. Displays around the school show the breadth of your work, in art and in topic work such as that on 'Changes'. The school provides you with a good range of interesting activities, in lessons and at other times. It is very clear that you enjoy school enormously.

Progress is being speeded up this year because the quality of teaching is good overall. Your highly effective headteacher has helped teachers and teaching assistants to improve progress which was beginning to get a bit slow in the last few years and test results started to slip. The work that you are currently doing shows that standards are broadly average in the main, and sometimes higher.

The school has improved provision in the Nursery and Reception classes which is now good. It has also helped you to improve your handwriting and presentation of work. Teachers are right in saying that more needs to be done to improve your writing, and your work in mathematics. The school also needs to raise your achievements in science. In addition, we are asking teachers to develop further their skills in finding out exactly how well you are learning so that the tasks and help they give you are exactly right for you. We also ask that you are helped to gain a greater sense of your own achievements so that you can think about what you need to learn next. Most of you attend school regularly but some do not and we encourage all of you to miss as few school days as possible.

We hope that you continue to work hard and enjoy school in the new building as much as you enjoy it now in the delightful settings with a stream and woodland.

Yours faithfully

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector