

Axminster Community Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 113059 |
| Local Authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 338083 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 November 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Grahame Sherfield HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 202 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr R Butler |
| Headteacher | Mr A Harvell |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 January 2007 |
| School address | Stoney Lane Axminster Devon EX13 5BU |
| Telephone number | 01297 33005 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils and looked at key school documents, such as the improvement plan and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also scrutinised 44 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which the standards pupils reach are improving
- the progress made in developing the curriculum and how this contributes to improving pupils' basic skills
- how well the systems established by the school's leaders and managers have an impact on pupils' progress
- how well the school promotes community cohesion within the school and beyond.

Information about the school

This average-sized primary school serves a mainly White British community where an average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A very small number of pupils have recently joined the school who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. Provision is made for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a class with Year 1 pupils. The teacher of this class has been absent through illness since the summer of 2009 and the current teacher is temporary.

A breakfast club and an after-school club on the premises are managed by a private provider, although the school is at an advanced stage in the process of taking over these activities. Two private providers manage pre-school activities on the school site.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Pupils value the caring, friendly and supportive environment created by the headteacher and his staff and enjoy school. They behave well and their personal development is good. Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the school. One parent praised the 'very practical and sustainable way' in which the school prepares children to enjoy adult life, another noted the 'close family-like attitude' in the school and a third reported that children learn in 'a fun environment'. Inspection evidence fully supports these views which are representative of most parents and carers.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the standards pupils reach by the end of Year 2 rose to above average in 2009. The school has successfully improved pupils' achievement in English by the end of Year 6, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils, so that it is similar to that in mathematics. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and they reach standards in line with national averages. Their progress is improving as a result of the rigorous tracking of the work of individual pupils and better teaching, but there has not yet been enough time for these features to influence the standards reached by pupils when they leave the school.

Pupils work well in lessons and often find the activities enjoyable. Teaching has improved significantly and is now good. Much of the teaching observed by inspectors was good, with carefully planned lessons meeting pupils' needs well. In a few lessons however, the pace of learning was slower and activities were not well matched to the differing needs of the pupils. The curriculum meets pupils' needs satisfactorily. A new topic-based approach is being introduced to provide more opportunities for pupils to consolidate their skills in literacy and numeracy in different subjects. This development is at an early stage and it has not yet had a significant impact on pupils' progress. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is supported by sharply focused plans in some classes but these are not of consistently good quality across the school.

The priorities in the improvement plan are clear and based on effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Challenging targets have been set for accelerating pupils' progress in English and mathematics by the summer of 2010. Consequently, the capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress so that by the Year 6 national tests in 2010, 86% of pupils have risen two levels in English since the end of Year 2 and 83% have

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achieved this rise in mathematics.

- Improve the quality of all teaching to the level of the best, by ensuring that teaching is consistently well matched to pupils' differing needs.
- Establish further opportunities for learning, and for developing pupils' key skills in literacy and numeracy, by exploiting the potential of creative links between subjects.
- Ensure that the support planned for pupils with special educational needs is more consistently sharply focused across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils behave well around the school and in the classrooms and they are particularly appreciative of the 'fun things' they often experience in lessons. As a result, they enjoy coming to school, frequently show real engagement in their work and their concentration is good.

Pupils' progress has been slower in English than in mathematics and the school has tackled this successfully. As a result of the rigorous monitoring of pupils' work and a sharp focus on improving writing, pupils' progress in English by the end of Year 6 improved significantly in 2009, with an impressive proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5. Inspection evidence indicates that the school is on track to sustain this improvement in 2010. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to their peers as their needs are clearly identified and appropriate support is provided in class. The Year 6 national test results in English and mathematics in 2009 indicate that more-able pupils are starting to make faster progress, with many doing better than expected.

Pupils have a good grasp of the importance of eating healthy food and of taking plenty of exercise. They make a good contribution to the school community. Older pupils take on a wide range of duties around the school and each classroom provides various opportunities for pupils to show responsibility. 'Eco-warriors' work to ensure the most efficient use of energy in each classroom and monitor the energy provided by the school's solar panels. Pupils contribute ideas through the school council and are confident that their suggestions are taken seriously. They have developed good skills in working together and in using information and communication technology. These, taken with their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, equip pupils soundly for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Teachers engage their pupils in classrooms within a positive atmosphere where relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are good. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from targets which give clear indications of what they need to do to improve in English and mathematics and are pleased with the guidance teachers give on how to do better. Good teaching observed was characterised by a brisk pace and good use of the interactive whiteboards to support pupils' learning. Activities were carefully planned to engage pupils' interest and to meet the differing needs of those in the class. Adjusting teaching to address misunderstandings noted in previous lessons was a positive feature. Where teaching was no more than satisfactory, the pace of learning was slower and sometimes too much time was given to activities. Work was not as well matched to pupils' needs and important learning by some pupils was not shared appropriately with the rest of the class.

The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development and to the development of their skills in using information and communication technology. Specific support for particular pupils has helped them to improve their progress and good attention has been given to developing pupils' writing. Good support has been provided for those pupils who have recently joined the school with English as an additional language. Productive links between different subjects are being exploited to create engaging topics where pupils have interesting opportunities to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy but the school recognises that this is at an early stage of development. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is

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satisfactory. Additional support is provided when needed in lessons but plans for addressing particular needs are not focused sharply and consistently enough across the school. Sometimes targets for improvement are rather imprecise. Pupils are well cared for and flourish in the friendly and supportive atmosphere in the school. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is appreciated by pupils and there is a high level of participation.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The governors and the headteacher have created a strong staff team which shares the vision for the school's improvement. Senior staff have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and clear ideas about how to improve further. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science play an important role in leading and evaluating improvements in pupils' progress in their subjects and in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The governing body understands both the school's strengths and what needs to be done and contributes to monitoring progress with the improvement plan. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher, the staff and the pupils and visit the school to find out for themselves how things are going, but it is acknowledged that this could be more systematically planned, recorded and reported to the governing body.

The progress made by individual pupils is carefully tracked so that additional support or challenge can be provided where there is evidence of possible underachievement. However, because the current system has been in operation for only a year, it is too early to judge its full impact. The school does sound work to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to make progress and achieve as well as they can, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, and satisfactorily ensures that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion and has good links with the local community. It helps pupils to understand other cultures and issues such as racism through its curriculum but recognises that more should be done to promote pupils' understanding of diversity in Great Britain and beyond. The school has good partnerships with a range of external organisations which help to extend the opportunities for pupils both in their work and in their personal development. Good

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examples of these are the effective partnership with the local learning community and the various visitors and visits that help to enrich the curriculum.

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements well. Checks have been made on all adults who work within the school and a single central record is maintained and updated when needed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school, their skills are generally below expected levels. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and, in 2008/09, attainment was in line with levels expected by the end of the Reception Year.

The children currently in Reception have made a good start. They benefit from good teaching which includes a wide range of adult-led and child-selected activities. Classroom routines are well established and promote children's independence effectively. Planning addresses all areas of learning thoroughly and helps to ensure that the needs of the children are met well. Relationships and behaviour are good. Children are happy and feel secure in a caring environment where all welfare requirements are met.

Despite the illness of the permanent member of staff, the quality of leadership and management has been maintained. The temporary teacher is carrying out her role capably and is ensuring that practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage is continuing to develop. The staff work well together, although there is scope to share the planning of activities and other responsibilities more extensively among the team. There are good

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arrangements for assessing children's progress and careful records are kept by the staff, supported by photographs and ongoing notes about children's activities.

There is a good partnership with parents and carers. They feel confident about coming into school to talk informally about their child's progress and are welcome to join the class each Wednesday afternoon. Good relationships with pre-school provision help to ensure children's smooth entry into the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Analysis of the parents' questionnaires showed that support for the school is very strong. All respondents believe their child enjoys school and that the school keeps children safe. Parents and carers are also strongly supportive of the way the school meets children's particular needs and helps them to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspection evidence indicates that these positive views are largely justified.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Axminster Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 25 | 57 | 19 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 26 | 59 | 18 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 22 | 50 | 18 | 41 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 23 | 52 | 21 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 25 | 57 | 19 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 22 | 50 | 21 | 48 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 24 | 55 | 20 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 24 | 55 | 17 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 20 | 46 | 23 | 52 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 18 | 41 | 20 | 46 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 16 | 36 | 23 | 52 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 25 | 57 | 17 | 39 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 26 | 59 | 17 | 39 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Axminster Community Primary School, Axminster EX15 5BU

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection, particularly for the friendly and open way in which you talked to us. We enjoyed visiting your school very much.

You go to a satisfactory school which is improving quickly. We agree with you that it is friendly and caring. Here are some important things we found out about your school:

- You make satisfactory progress in your work, supported by a sound curriculum.
- The teaching in your school has improved and it is now good.
- The youngest children get off to a good start in the Reception class.
- Your behaviour is good.
- The school cares for you well and you feel safe.
- The governors, the headteacher and the other staff have been successful in making improvements and are determined to make the school even better.

These are the main things we have asked the school to do to keep improving:

- We have requested that the school helps you to make faster progress in English and mathematics by ensuring that all the teaching in the school is as good as the best. You can help by doing your best in your work.
- The school has started to introduce topics where you have opportunities to improve your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. We have asked for this approach to be developed further. You can help by making the most of new opportunities to improve your skills.

Thank you again for your involvement in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Grahame Sherfield

Her Majesty's Inspector

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