

Totnes St John's CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113406
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338162
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Endean
Headteacher	Andrew Squire
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at documentation including records of pupils' progress and that relating to safeguarding their welfare, and considered the responses of some pupils, staff and 59 parents who completed their questionnaire.

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

- the impact of the school's work to improve standards of writing, including the monitoring of the progress of different groups of pupils
- the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in communication, language and literacy
- the quality of teaching and learning and the impact on it of monitoring and evaluation
- the quality of the governors' work to ensure pupils are safe, and to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

This smaller than average size primary school serves part of a country town. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity. While a few speak a language other than English at home, none is at an early stage of learning English. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Reception class. The assistant headteacher and the leader of Years 3 to 6 took up their posts on 1 September 2009.

The school shares its site with a children's centre that is not managed by the governing body.

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

Standards attained by pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 have varied in recent years, but are broadly average. When the new headteacher was appointed in 2007, he correctly identified weaknesses in standards of mathematics, and these have been successfully improved. More recently, standards of writing were identified as a weakness, and action taken has led to improvements in Reception and Years 1 and 2. However, in Years 3 to 6, there is a legacy of significant underachievement in writing. This was caused by the narrow range of tasks used, with a lack of opportunity for older pupils to write at length, and a lack of guidance to enable younger and/or lower attaining pupils to develop their skills. Very recent improvements in the quality of teaching demonstrate that teachers have an understanding of this issue and that most have the strategies to carry out improvements, but as yet there has been insufficient time for these to have a significant impact on standards. Pupils' progress is broadly satisfactory. In some subjects, such as science, art and physical education, it is good, and standards are higher than those expected. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to effective planning to meet their needs and good support from teaching assistants. Other groups of pupils, such as those of minority ethnic heritage, also make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

The school is a happy, friendly place where pupils behave well and where there are good relationships between pupils and with adults. Pupils feel very safe and the school takes all necessary steps to ensure they are. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils have a good understanding of the range of cultures and peoples in Britain and the world. They experience a broad curriculum in which good use is made of the excellent and varied school grounds. However, the organisation, pace and timing of lessons is less good and sometimes restricts pupils' opportunities to learn, for instance when lessons overrun and tasks have to be completed later, leading to other learning opportunities being postponed or cancelled. On frequent occasions, pupils are removed from class by adults in order to undertake some other task, disrupting learning unnecessarily.

Recent changes have strengthened senior leadership and teaching. The headteacher's leadership is dynamic and approachable, and he is respected by parents, pupils and staff. He has motivated staff to examine their practice and identify aspects in need of improvement. However, while there is an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, some aspects of monitoring lack the necessary rigour to promote rapid improvement, for example through the regular scrutiny of pupils' work and the quality of teachers' marking. Leaders and governors have correctly identified weaknesses and have taken action to remedy them, which in some cases, such as in the

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Early Years Foundation Stage, have already led to good improvements. For these reasons, the school has good capacity for further sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by ensuring that
- they are given motivating tasks that enable them to develop the full range of writing skills
- tasks are presented in ways that enable them to produce the best writing of which they are capable at that stage of their development
- older and more able pupils are given more opportunities to write at length, enabling them to develop writing styles that are appropriate to the subject and audience for which they are writing.
- Improve the quality of curriculum planning to ensure that
- pupils' learning is not disrupted by unnecessary absence from the lesson
- the pace of lessons ensures that they start and finish on time, so that other learning opportunities are not lost.
- Improve the impact of monitoring on the quality of teaching and of pupils' progress by
- regular scrutiny of pupils' work to identify strengths and weaknesses and to focus teaching appropriately
- ensuring that marking and other guidance consistently shows pupils how to improve their work.

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

Some aspects of pupils' achievement are good. Attainment in science is above average, for example pupils in a Year 4 lesson showed good understanding of the habitat and lifestyle of moles. In art, pupils in Year 3 were motivated to produce self-portraits in the style of Picasso which were of a high standard. Pupils behave well and show care and concern for each other. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and take plenty of exercise, although not all actively pursue a healthy diet. They know how to stay safe, for instance when playing in the extensive school grounds. They behave well, especially at play, but occasionally can become noisy in class if the task does not motivate them to learn. They value and respect differences between each other and have a good understanding of a range of faiths and cultures. They make a good contribution to the school and local communities, for example by taking part in events such as the mayor-choosing, which develops their understanding of citizenship. Pupils' attendance is average and the school has made good progress in reducing the number who have poor attendance. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get good support. Their needs are clearly identified, clearly understood by staff and are met well both within the classroom and around the school. As a result, they make good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally as the school monitors progress by gender carefully and takes effective action when differences are identified.

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Standards in mathematics and reading are average, representing satisfactory and sometimes good progress from pupils' starting points. In writing, standards are below average and progress is slower. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not have a fluent handwriting style and have a limited understanding of how to set out a piece of work effectively. In marked contrast, pupils are confident and articulate in speech. For instance, when asked to define a debate, a Year 4 pupil replied: 'It's when you challenge each other.' Among younger pupils in Reception to Year 2, the recent emphasis on the teaching of letters and sounds is beginning to have a positive impact on standards of both writing and reading. Pupils have good skills of learning independently, and of using information and communication technology (ICT) but the limitations in their writing place a restriction on the overall development of the skills they will need in the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory. None is inadequate and some is good, occasionally outstanding. Features of the best teaching include high expectations of what pupils can achieve, good pace and the use of resources that interest and engage pupils. Sometimes, teachers talk

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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to the whole class for too long, expecting teaching assistants to support pupils who become bored or who do not understand. In the teaching of writing, tasks often do not include sufficient guidance to enable all pupils to produce their best work, or to help them to develop and practise new skills. This point was noted by parents in relation to homework tasks. In most classes, pupils have appropriate targets for literacy and numeracy although, tellingly, these are often at lower levels for writing than for other skills, reflecting past underachievement in this area. Nevertheless, pupils have a good understanding of their targets, and are beginning to use them effectively to improve their work, especially in mathematics. Some teachers enable pupils to effectively assess their own and each other's work, but this good practice is not consistent throughout.

The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities and is especially well resourced for physical and outdoor education. Pupils say they enjoy these opportunities, along with the shortened lunchtime which allows a range of additional activities to take place on Friday afternoons. This approach is also popular with many parents and with staff. However, the range of writing tasks is narrow, with too few opportunities for older pupils to write at length or practise their skills in all lessons. The organisation of lessons does not always promote sustained learning. Pupils are often taken from the classroom by other adults to perform alternative tasks. Sometimes, lessons overrun and other planned work is cancelled so that earlier tasks can be completed.

The school cares well for its pupils, a fact recognised by both parents and the pupils themselves. It has good relationships with the children's centre and local secondary schools and pupils are well prepared for changes of school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 good leadership of the headteacher has recently been further strengthened by new appointments at senior level. As a result, the school is well placed to raise the expectations and aspirations of staff and to tackle the key weaknesses. The latter are already known to the school as a consequence of effective monitoring and accurate self-assessment. Some effective action has been taken, for instance in improving quality in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Analysis of data and the tracking of pupils' progress are beginning to be used well to identify slow progress or underachievement. The impact of monitoring on the improvement of teaching and learning is limited as it does not extend to the regular scrutiny of pupils' work and the quality of teachers' marking.

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The school is effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination, as is shown by the good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The governing body is well led by the knowledgeable and experienced chair. It is effective in challenging and supporting the school and meets its statutory duties well, for example in ensuring pupils are safe, in promoting community cohesion, and in ensuring that all requirements to keep children safe are in place. The school works well with a range of partners such as local businesses and other schools to enhance pupils' learning. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and are particularly complimentary about the headteacher's approachability and positive nature. Although many of the outcomes are good, because of the current weaknesses in standards of writing and some aspects of the provision, the school is currently providing satisfactory value for money.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, children make good progress during their time in Reception. They enter with skills slightly below those expected for their age. They make particularly good progress in learning letters and sounds and in their creative and physical development. The rate of progress has improved considerably over the last three years.

Provision is good. Children settle quickly into Reception because staff are skilled at ensuring that they understand what is expected of them. For example, a teacher modelled a speaking voice when children began to shout out answers. Classroom routines are established and children are encouraged to become more independent, for example finding and putting on their Wellington boots as they prepare for a nature walk.

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Staff make regular observations of children's achievements and make appropriate use of this data to plan activities to meet children's needs. Teachers are skilled at planning exciting opportunities for children to explore and find things out for themselves as well as activities such as healthy eating led by adults. The outdoor area is often used well to promote most areas of learning and children's ideas are valued. Staff pay good attention to children's welfare.

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear understanding of what is helping to raise achievement, for example in the teaching of phonics, although there is more to be done on developing aspects of writing where progress is not as good as it might be. Staff work seamlessly together in supporting all children and there are good links with pre-schools and with parents.

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

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, which they describe as 'warm', 'welcoming' and 'a school with a heart'. Their children want to go to school to learn. Parents feel positive about staff, especially the headteacher and his approachability before and after school, and adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most feel behaviour is good, although a few had concerns about bullying. Inspectors' evidence is that any cases are handled well. Some felt the school should inform them earlier when their children are struggling. Parents rightly believe their children are kept safe. A concern was raised as to whether volunteers that work with the children have Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks. Inspectors checked on this point and confirm that in all cases such checks are carried out.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Totnes St John's CE 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 200 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	54	23	39	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	70	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	32	37	63	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	51	24	41	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	48	29	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	41	33	56	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	56	26	44	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)	17	29	36	61	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	36	36	61	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	24	33	56	55	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	24	41	70	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	68	18	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	68	19	32	0	0	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.



08 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CE Primary School, Totnes, TQ9 5TZ

We enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school. We would like to thank those of you who gave up your time to talk to us. Yours is a satisfactory school, with many good features. What we liked most about it was your good behaviour and the way you look after each other. You know how to stay healthy and safe and the adults look after you well. Children in Reception get a good start to school.

You make satisfactory progress in your work and reach average standards by the time you leave Year 6, although your writing could be improved. Everyone in class is respected, so you feel you can say what you think and you are very good at explaining things. Some of your work is really good. I was especially impressed by the Year 3 self-portraits. You also know and understand your targets, and some of you make helpful comments about each other's work.

The headteacher, staff and governors run the school well. They have lots of good links especially with the children's centre and other schools, so you will feel confident when you go to secondary school. Your parents think highly of the school because the staff take good care of you and respect their views.

We have asked the school to do three things. We have asked them to improve your writing and have suggested some ways they might do this. We have asked them to make sure you are not taken out of class when it is not necessary and that lessons finish on time. We have also asked them to look at your work more frequently so that they are clear about what you need to do to improve. You can help by politely telling the teacher when you do not understand what to do, or how to improve your work, especially your writing.

Good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Paul Sadler

Lead Inspector

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