

South Molton United Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113454
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338176
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Hulme
Headteacher	Patricia Martin
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent over 70% of their time in evaluating the quality of pupils' learning. They visited 15 lessons, observed all the teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documents, including the school's records of pupils' progress and its monitoring activities, school policies and guidelines, teachers' plans and questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 55 parents.

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

- changes in the rate of pupils' progress over the last three years
- the consistency of the quality of teaching and use of assessment
- the way the curriculum is adapted to meet pupils' needs
- the impact of recent changes in leadership on the school's performance.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased and is much higher than found nationally, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs in a school of this size. The majority of these pupils' special needs relate to behavioural and emotional, and/or speech and language difficulties. There are unusually wide variations in the number of pupils in each year group, so the organisation of classes changes from one year to the next. This year pupils in Years 3 and 6 are taught in single-age classes. Those in Years 4 and 5 are taught in mixed-age classes. There have been frequent changes of teaching staff and senior managers in the last two years. A new headteacher took up post in January 2009 and the new senior teacher took up post in January 2010. The school has Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards.

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

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving strongly following a period of uncertainty and frequent changes of staff during which many aspects of its performance slipped. The new and experienced headteacher provides clear and effective leadership and, together with staff and governors, has established a strong programme designed to improve practice and raise standards. This is already making a difference. She introduced effective systems to check the school's work and quickly obtained an accurate picture of its performance and pupils' progress. This is being used well to address weaknesses. Pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are improving and the school has demonstrated that it is soundly placed to improve further. However, until this year, in the absence of a senior management team, the school's checks and balances have been over-reliant on the headteacher. The very new senior teacher and other recently designated subject leaders have not had time to become fully involved in these processes. They are clear about the potential for their roles and are keenly embarking on training opportunities, enabling them to increasingly share the many leadership roles undertaken by the headteacher.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average, having been above average at the time of the last inspection when there were fewer pupils with special educational needs. Progress by pupils of all abilities is satisfactory and in around half the classes it is good, having accelerated this school year. However, some pupils are not yet performing to their full potential as they are still making up lost ground from a year or two ago when progress was slower. This is a concern of some parents replying to the questionnaire and is shared by inspectors. The care, guidance and support for all pupils are good. This is an important contributory factor in the good features of pupils' personal development. These include a keen awareness of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and the extent to which pupils feel safe and well looked after in school. Nearly all pupils enjoy school and their attendance is high, even on snowy days in January.

Much of the teaching observed was good in most of the classes and is further strengthened by the extensive team of skilful teaching assistants, but a few inconsistencies in practice mean that the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Teachers do not consistently make best use of the increased range of assessment information when planning work to ensure it matches the needs of different groups. Pupils are not sufficiently trained to reflect on their own learning and how to improve. In a few classes this is not helped by infrequent or relatively superficial marking and a general lack of pace and challenge.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The long-term curricular programme does not fully reflect the current organisation of classes and year groups and has not embraced national

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developments towards a creative and thematic approach. The school is aware of these shortcomings and the too-limited access to computers in classrooms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve pupils' attainment, ensure the quality of teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons in all classes by the end of this school year, making sure:
 - all teachers make full use of the new assessment arrangements and information when planning lessons and setting targets
 - work set is challenging and consistently matched closely to the needs of different ability groups
 - teachers regularly provide clear feedback to pupils about how to improve
 - pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to talk about and reflect on how well they are doing and their next steps.
- Provide those new to their leadership roles with training to enable them to become fully and effectively involved in monitoring and improving those aspects for which they have responsibility by the end of this school year.
- Ensure the school has a clear and coherent long-term curriculum plan by September 2010 which
 - responds to pupils' different needs and interests
 - takes full advantage of computer technologies
 - is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing class organisation from one year to the next.

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

The attainment of pupils on entry to Year 3 is broadly average. Attainment by the time pupils leave the school is also broadly average, as indicated in national tests and pupils' work. The decline in attainment, now halted, has been greater in mathematics than in English and science. Evidence from pupils' books shows that most pupils in Year 6 are working at levels expected for their age and they are on track to attain broadly average standards, although marginally below average in mathematics. The school's records indicate that many pupils made limited progress during the time of frequent staffing changes and did not meet their targets. Evidence from pupils' work this school year and in lessons seen shows that girls and boys of all abilities are making at least satisfactory progress, and frequently good progress. This is helping to bridge the gap created during an earlier period of slower progress in the case of the older pupils, and is ensuring pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. By the time these pupils leave they have satisfactory levels in the skills needed for their next stage of education. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with speech and language difficulties, are responding well to the increased range of additional support programmes being led by

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teachers and assistants. In most cases it is too soon to judge the impact of these on their progress but the pupils are clearly gaining self-confidence and show positive attitudes to their learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with their spiritual development being particularly strong, as seen in an act of collective worship when they responded very sensitively and thoughtfully to ideas about conditional and unconditional love. Behaviour, while good in lessons and exemplary in collective worship, is somewhat boisterous in the playground as there are limited activities organised to engage the pupils. However, pupils report only rare incidences of bullying and are confident such cases are handled well. Cultural development, although satisfactory overall, is less developed, particularly pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity of modern Britain beyond rural Devon. Involvement in local cultural activities such as the Old English Fair is a strength. Pupils clearly enjoy school and there are no persistent absentees. There are reasonable opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities around the school, although the peer mediation scheme has lapsed. Pupils are keen to be elected to the school council and take their role seriously, for example conducting surveys about school life and deciding which charities to support.

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	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	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

Good induction arrangements enable pupils to settle quickly and happily. Parents appreciate this. One parent of a new pupil wrote, 'He was a settled and happy member of the school within weeks.' All pupils are well cared for by the extensive staff team. Those with particular needs and who may be regarded as vulnerable, for example, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are carefully nurtured. The school works closely and diligently with parents and outside professionals to meet their needs, and the curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of those with learning difficulties.

Teaching is improving significantly in response to changes in the deployment of staff, raised expectations of all during the last year and the introduction of new practices. The majority of teaching in lessons observed was good and in two cases there were elements of outstanding practice. Particular strengths include very good subject knowledge, for example when using a text on the Lynmouth flood disaster to reflect on journalistic styles of writing. Another excellent element observed was when pupils were collaborating very well and having fun, working independently in small groups preparing to perform an Edward Lear poem. The quality of the learning environment is varied, being of high quality in two rooms, with many prompts about academic and personal learning and thinking skills, but is satisfactory, being less inspiring, in others. In a few lessons the needs of the wide abilities of pupils are not fully addressed and more able pupils in particular are not being challenged, for example as seen when rounding decimal fractions. A close scrutiny of pupils' books shows sustained good learning in some classes, with high expectations and substantial recorded work, while progress in others is satisfactory. New ways of assessing pupils' learning, sharing the information and setting short-term targets, are being introduced, including beginning to involve pupils more in reflecting on their own learning, but these are not embedded across the school. The quality of marking and feedback, while satisfactory, does not consistently explain to pupils how they can improve.

The two mixed-age classes each contain a large number of pupils for the size of the rooms, and this restricts movement, the use of innovative teaching and the time the teacher can give to each pupil. The school site and accommodation, for example the limited access to the computer suite, also impose some restrictions on teachers' plans for lessons and the wider curriculum. Nevertheless, teachers plan a broad and balanced range of activities, ensuring a satisfactory curriculum. While new members of staff become established, the school has made limited progress in developing a more innovative curriculum designed to make more use of pupils' interests as starting points. Teachers offer an extensive range of clubs and additional activities in which pupils keenly participate, such as gardening, chess and sporting fixtures, often through a local partnership. A residential experience and a day trip to London enrich older pupils' experiences well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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<p>The quality of teaching</p> <p>Taking into account:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The use of assessment to support learning</p>	3
	3
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	3
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	2

How effective are leadership and management?

In a matter of months, following a period of turbulence and uncertainty, the new headteacher, with the support of governors, established a purposeful and united approach to improving all aspects of the school. Effective systems were introduced to evaluate the school's performance, including monitoring practice in classrooms and tracking pupils' progress over time. Well-structured improvement plans are being implemented and the reconfigured and new staff team are beginning to reduce the previous over-reliance on the headteacher to drive forward improvement. Staff who are new to their leadership roles are being successfully helped by the local authority, who, while providing additional support and staff training, are ensuring the school retains overall responsibility for its improvement.

The school has an accurate view of its performance. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are actively involved in detailed and frequent checks on progress being made, holding the school to account for its actions. They conscientiously ensure their legal responsibilities are fulfilled. An example of this is the way they determinedly promote rigorous procedures designed to safeguard pupils, and these are effective across the school. The school does not tolerate discrimination and is committed to promoting equal opportunities. Carefully targeted deployment of additional staff helps ensure all pupils are fully included regardless of their particular needs or class size.

The school is successful in its promotion of partnerships with external agencies and professionals, particularly in helping to meet the needs of the increasing proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Partnerships with parents and carers are satisfactory, despite the school's concerted efforts in terms of providing workshops, home-school diaries and frequent parents' evenings to involve parents. The school has a good understanding of the needs of the local community and plays an active role in promoting community cohesion. It is aware that the opportunities it provides for pupils are too limited at national and global levels and has outline plans to strengthen this.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</p> <p>Taking into account:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	3
	3

<p>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</p>	
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

While the very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspectors' survey were generally positive about the school, a relatively small proportion strongly agreed about each aspect. Few parents added either positive or negative comments and there was no pattern in the pupils' year groups from which comments came. Inspectors agree with parents and carers, almost all of whom feel the school keeps their children safe. Inspectors understand the concern expressed by nearly a quarter of parents about progress made by their children. However, inspectors found progress is accelerating and achievement is now satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Molton United Church of England Junior 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 152 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	27	35	64	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	18	33	35	64	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	22	34	62	5	9	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	20	31	56	10	18	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	18	33	28	51	4	7	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	27	27	49	7	13	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	20	40	73	3	5	1	2
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)	14	25	30	55	6	11	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	25	27	49	8	15	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	20	32	58	7	13	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	16	39	71	2	4	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	16	29	31	56	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	27	30	55	6	11	2	3

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.



18 January 2010

Dear Children,

Inspection of South Molton United Church of England Junior School, South Molton EX36 3GN

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when it was covered in snow. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing some of your work, spending time in lessons and walking around the school. You were very helpful in answering our questions. Yours is a satisfactory school that is improving in important ways. There are some things that are good but others that could be better. Here are some highlights we found.

- You behave well in lessons, collaborate well together and share sensibly. We were impressed by the very thoughtful ideas you shared in collective worship.
- Those of you with special responsibilities, such as the school councillors and hall monitors, do your jobs sensibly and reliably.
- You have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking lots of exercise in order to stay healthy.
- You are all very good at attending school almost every day. We are pleased you enjoy school. Your teachers plan interesting things for you to do and you work well in lessons. The teachers are challenging you more than in the past and many of you are showing them that you can do well.
- The school takes good care of you. We are pleased you feel safe in school. The staff and governors are very careful about this and also make sure there is always someone to help those of you who from time to time have problems.
- Your headteacher has lots of ideas about how to make the school better and is very good at encouraging everyone to work together as a team.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to focus on three things to make the school even better.

Help you to achieve higher standards by ensuring teachers:

- carefully match work to the different groups in your class so it is not too hard or too easy for you
- when looking at your work, give you lots of ideas about how to improve
- help you to assess, talk and think more about what you have learnt.

Help the various leaders take on more responsibilities around the school for checking

how well everything is working.

Produce a new plan to cover all the subjects you are taught, with nothing repeated or missed out and ensuring teachers check things that you find interesting and that you have plenty of chances to use computers.

We are sure you will have your own ideas about how to improve the school and will want to talk about these with your school councillors.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Kerly, Lead Inspector

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