

Ernesettle Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134802
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	341530
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joyce Harris
Headteacher	Barry Coppins
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, parents and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, records, assessments and 63 questionnaires completed by parents.

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

- pupils' current attainment and progress as indicated by the school's assessment information
- whether the quality of teaching has improved sufficiently to raise achievement
- recent trends in pupils' attendance.

Information about the school

Ernesettle Community Primary School is larger than most primary schools. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to average. The majority of these pupils have speech, language and communications difficulties and/or dyslexia.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act of 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The overall effectiveness of Ernesettle Community School is inadequate. There are three areas of significant weakness.

First, pupils' attainment is below average and has been for a number of years, with only a little improvement in 2010. Attainment in writing, especially for boys, remains particularly low. From below-average starting points, pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory. Those with speech, language and communications difficulties and/or dyslexia make similar progress. Pupils' achievement is therefore inadequate.

Second, teaching, planning and assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage are weak, so children do not make a good start to their schooling. They have few opportunities to learn outdoors. Because of this poor start and teaching that is insufficiently challenging in Years 1 to 6, there has been little success in establishing higher attainment, particularly in English and mathematics.

Third, a lack of rigour in tackling weaknesses means that improvements since the previous inspection are fragile. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is unsatisfactory. Senior leaders and governors have not identified the weaknesses in provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governing body does not check on all aspects of the school's work and so is not aware of what needs improving. The senior leadership team is committed to raising attainment and has benefited from strong external support to improve the accuracy of self-evaluation. Teachers' use of assessment is developing and pupils' progress is tracked. School improvement plans identify appropriate actions needed to tackle concerns and in some aspects pupils' attainment is improving, but not quickly enough.

There are some strengths in teaching, such as the way teachers encourage pupils' enthusiasm to learn and promote a positive ethos in the classroom. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, but there is not enough good practice to overcome pupils' low attainment. Many lessons do not challenge all pupils or focus enough on learning, so progress is often slow. Advice given to pupils through marking is inconsistent and does not provide clear targets. The curriculum is satisfactory and the good range of after-school clubs is deservedly popular.

The school has other strengths. Pupils enjoy school and get along very well with one

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another and their teachers. Behaviour is good and there are few disruptions. Pupils report that they feel safe at school. Care is good; all adults know their charges well and pupils are aware that advice and help are always close at hand. The school has good links with parents and strives to engage those who are hard to reach.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - raising attainment through more challenging, focused teaching
 - promoting faster progress in lessons through ensuring better pace and that activities are appropriate for pupils' capabilities
 - providing consistently clear advice to pupils about the next steps in their learning.
- Develop the capabilities of leaders and managers by:
 - using information from self-evaluation more rigorously to address areas of weakness
 - ensuring the governing body monitors the school's performance systematically, raises its awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and provides greater challenge
- By September 2010, improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing accurate assessment that will inform better planning and teaching
 - using resources, including staff, to ensure children initiate and extend their learning, both indoors and out
 - establishing coherent leadership and management to ensure consistently good practice in this key stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils' attainment has been below average for many years. The school is gathering increasingly sophisticated information on pupils' attainment. This indicates that the results of national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2010 will remain below average. Attainment in English, and especially in boys' writing, is lowest and remains a significant barrier to pupils' progress in all areas. The limited attention paid to communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that the pupils are constantly having to try to catch up on their reading and writing in later years. Success has been limited.

Most pupils are now making satisfactory progress in all subjects. Provision for pupils who have speech, language and communications difficulties and/or dyslexia supports their satisfactory progress. This is evident in data and in lesson observations carried out during the inspection. However, as long as teaching remains no better than satisfactory, there is insufficient high-quality provision to give progress the big boost it needs to raise attainment. Pupils' achievement is inadequate.

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Pupils are happy at school and appreciate how adults take good care of them. One of them said, 'It's a happy school, 'Together we learn' is a good motto,' and others agreed. Behaviour is good and this makes classrooms happy, potentially productive places to learn. Pupils understand the importance of a nutritious, balanced diet and enjoy the healthier school meals. Many are enthusiastic participants in the numerous sporting opportunities the school provides.

Pupils greatly value their school community and are keen to play their part, taking responsibility for younger ones in the playground and helping in assemblies. The school council provides a lively forum where the pupils' voice can be heard and their views acted upon. The eco-council acts as the 'green conscience' of the school checking up, for example, on each classroom's electricity consumption. While pupils develop good personal skills to help them in the next stages of their lives, low attainment and slow progress in the important areas of literacy and numeracy limit their development.

An interesting range of opportunities for contact with other cultures, both locally and further afield, contributes to pupils' good cultural development. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong and their mature, positive relationships ensure good social development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes contribute to satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers manage classrooms well and have secure subject knowledge. Teaching assistants are well qualified and thoroughly briefed. They work effectively with pupils who have additional needs, such as those with speech, language and communications difficulties. Teachers usually question pupils well and encourage constructive dialogue. Too much teaching is insufficiently challenging to promote higher attainment. Lesson planning does not always identify opportunities to stretch pupils sufficiently and the pace of lessons often lacks urgency. Lesson plans focus what pupils will do rather than what they will learn, so teachers do not emphasise or sum up learning sufficiently well. Marking has similar tendencies; it provides praise for pupils but too often fails to indicate important next steps in learning.

The school collects assessment information in a central database. This enables trends to be identified and indicates where action should be taken to support those who may be underachieving. However, class teachers' current limited access to this data prevents its wider use.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and some cross-curricular links involving numeracy add interest, although the school recognises that more links between subjects would provide greater stimulation. Local trips and visitors enhance pupils' personal and cultural development, and partnerships with schools in India and Ghana broaden their horizons.

The school works closely with parents and partners to provide a good standard of care. Close liaison with professionals ensures there is always help available to address individual issues, particularly for pupils who are potentially more vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Ernesettle Play Care provides after-school and holiday care for up to 16 children. It meets requirements and provides safe and pleasant surroundings. Staff are appropriately qualified. Children are all happy and well cared for. The provision is monitored by the headteacher but the reports provided for him by the group leader are infrequent.

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?

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The headteacher and senior managers are keen to embed ambition and promote better progress. Staffing difficulties have partially thwarted their efforts to develop better provision, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Weak leadership in this area means children make a poor start to their education. Monitoring activities involve a number of senior staff and, with the exception of the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide a fair picture of the school. The school's actions on areas of concern lack rigour so teaching, while improving, remains no better than satisfactory. Overall, action to overcome the school's track record of low attainment has been ineffective.

The governing body has some understanding of the school's strengths and is keen to support it. Its knowledge of daily school life is satisfactory, but it is unaware of weaknesses such as those in attainment and the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governing body participates in planning for the future but does not robustly challenge the school. Arrangements and policies for safeguarding meet requirements and are regularly reviewed, but some minor anomalies in records had to be addressed during the inspection. The school is a safe place to work and play, as parents and pupils attest.

The school works with success to involve parents closely in their children's education. Courses in literacy and numeracy for adults are well attended and promote an understanding of current methods of teaching. There are good arrangements for parents to gain access to information through the school's website, regular newsletters, termly meetings and open access at the start and end of school days. Parents are widely consulted on important issues, such as the school's priorities in planning for the future. They regularly raise money that is spent to support educational visits and, last year, enabled every pupil to be given a book for Christmas.

The 'excellence cluster' that groups local schools in partnership considerably enhances what Ernesettle is able to offer. It enables pupils with learning and emotional difficulties to benefit from extra help and expertise, such as counselling, art therapy and as learning mentors. Multi-agency support provides a wide range of other professionals, who are available to visit the school at short notice. Secure links with local secondary schools ensure pupils transfer into Year 7 with a minimum of difficulty. Potentially vulnerable pupils benefit from extra assistance to help them settle into secondary school.

Promotion of community cohesion is good. Strong local and international links promote pupils' understanding of the wider world well. This is clearly evident in the welcome given to new pupils, regardless of their linguistic or ethnic background. The school has good information about the performance of different groups of pupils. Its work with pupils who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs and/or difficulties ensures good equality of opportunity for all and no discrimination. Financial planning is good and some resources are well used, but inadequate outcomes for pupils mean that overall the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
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	4
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children do not make sufficient progress across a number of areas of learning. They enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below those typical of their age. Many are ill-equipped to move into more formal education in Year 1 and their attainment is below that normally seen for their age. Weaknesses in provision mean that children do not develop as independent learners. However, they learn to behave well and relate warmly to one another and adults.

Adults do not clearly understand children's aptitudes and progress because many of their assessments are inaccurate. Different methods of assessment are used in the Nursery and Reception classes and these do not marry up. Poor assessment means that there is no sound basis for planning activities for pupils, except in the newly-introduced work on letters and sounds. In particular, planning for the splendid outside area is negligible, so children use it as a playground rather than a different environment for learning. There are limited opportunities for children to initiate their own activities and extend their understanding.

Weaknesses in leadership have been exacerbated by staff changes. Self-evaluation in the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate. The Nursery and Reception classes operate largely independently of one another. There is very limited knowledge of outcomes for children in the Nursery and no significant impact on improving this provision. The leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage have failed to identify the urgent need to improve assessment and planning to promote improved progress for all children.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Parents appreciate the school, how much pupils enjoy school life and the good care given to their children. They expressed few concerns, although 20% of the small minority who returned the inspection survey were unhappy about the way the school deals with behaviour. The inspectors found no evidence of this during the inspection itself.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ernesettle Community 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 330 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	56	23	37	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	35	56	25	38	3	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	41	29	46	8	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	49	22	35	4	6	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	33	52	23	37	5	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	49	23	37	6	10	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	43	34	54	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)	25	40	26	41	6	10	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	46	24	38	5	8	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	40	24	38	8	13	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	47	30	48	5	8	4	7
The school is led and managed effectively	28	44	26	41	5	8	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	52	22	35	6	10	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



13 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ernesettle Community School, Plymouth, PL5 2RB

Thank you for your courtesy when the inspectors met you during our recent visit. It was good to meet such enthusiastic and well-behaved pupils. We were pleased to hear that many of you enjoy coming to school, that you feel safe, and that you appreciate the good care provided for you by the staff. However, your attainment is too low and needs to improve quickly with better teaching. We also felt that you could make more rapid progress, especially in English and mathematics.

We have judged that your school requires special measures. This means that it will be visited regularly by inspectors who will help the staff and check that things are improving. I have asked the school to work on these three areas:

- raise attainment through better marking and more lively teaching that emphasises learning more strongly. If you do not understand how to improve your work, ask your teachers
- teachers and the governing body need to lead and manage the school better by developing a fuller understanding of weak areas and actively working to improve them
- improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by making sure assessment and planning are better so that the children there make faster progress.

Once again, many thanks for all your help. It was good to meet you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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