

The Erme Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113254
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	378675
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Juliet Hammacott
Headteacher	Simon Hall
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons were observed and seven teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data about pupils' progress. In addition, they considered the school improvement plan, reports from the School Improvement Partner and a range of other documentation. Forty-nine responses to the parents' and carers' questionnaire were received and analysed, together with those from 68 pupils and 14 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Pupils' progress, especially that of those who are more able.
- The effectiveness of assessment in helping pupils know how to improve their work.
- The inspection team assessed the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning and enjoyment.
- Inspectors examined the impact of shared leadership – especially through the federation of schools – on improving pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average-sized school serves its local area in Ivybridge. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Only a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. An above-average percentage of pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities; these include specific and moderate learning, autistic spectrum, and speech, language and communication difficulties. Children in Year 6 are taught in a single age-group class. Other pupils, including children in the Reception Year, are taught in classes covering two age groups.

Since September 2009, the school has been part of the Moorsway Federation of schools, which includes two other local primary schools. The headteacher of The Erme is the executive headteacher of these schools. When he is working at these schools, the everyday running of The Erme is the responsibility of the head of teaching and learning.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Erme is a good school. It has outstanding partnerships in promoting the pupils' learning and well-being. Well-judged improvement work, together with making the most of the wider links provided by federation, have promoted steadily increasing rates of pupils' progress. As a result, progress is now good throughout the school and Year 6 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen from a significantly below average point four years ago to being above average in the current year. Within the overall good leadership, the headteacher provides a strong lead and a clear vision that is shared by staff and supported by governors. The head of teaching and learning shares the drive towards excellence and is instrumental in ensuring that the school moves towards its vision, whether or not the headteacher is in the school. Staff are committed to making further improvements, feeling that only the best is good enough for their pupils.

Pupils love their school and are very proud of their achievements. They feel safe in the school environment saying that, 'There is always someone who will help if you have a problem.' The way the school is organised into 'house groups' gives pupils opportunity to mix with others of different ages and this helps them to gain good social and moral understanding. Older pupils are keen to support younger ones and this builds in them an appreciation that the giving and receiving of help makes both individuals and the school community stronger.

Teaching is good and, combined with the stimulating and varied curriculum ensures that pupils are interested in what they do, concentrate well and make good progress. Pupils are particularly positive about the experiences that enrich their learning, for example writing poetry outdoors. Assessment is used well to identify how each pupil can move their learning forward and this is communicated very clearly to the pupils, who are consequently well informed about how to improve their work. This helps all, including the more able, to make good progress. There are a few occasions, from the Reception Year upwards, when both at the beginning of and during lessons, teachers and teaching assistants do not judge with sufficient precision when and how much instruction and further guidance pupils actually need to help them maximise their learning. The school provides good care, guidance and support. Each pupil is known and very effectively supported individually. There is very good personal guidance available to all pupils, particularly the more vulnerable when there is a need. Although attention has been given to raising attendance, and rates are better as a result, the school is not yet analysing attendance data closely enough to help in the drive to further improve this. School self-evaluation is well established. Systematic checking of the quality of the education provided has ensured that development

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planning has been accurately focused on improving attainment and rates of progress. This has been successful. The progress of each individual is carefully monitored, as is the progress of distinct groups of pupils. The school is not yet, however, making maximum use of the wealth of data it gathers to explore ways in which pupils' progress might be further improved by adjusting teaching and other provision. Partnerships with others are outstanding in the way that they have supported the improvements in teaching and the broadening of the curriculum. For example, the teamwork between staff at The Erme and the staff of the other schools is bringing a wider range of expertise to accelerate school improvement and pupils' progress. This teamwork, together with detailed and accurate school self-evaluation and the track record of sustained improvement, means the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers maximise the progress pupils might make during lessons by using more precise judgements about when and how much they should instruct and guide pupils.
- Make better use of data to:
 - finely tune teaching and school provision to be more effective
 - accelerate pupils' rates of progress to an outstanding level
 - improve rates of attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Initiatives such as the one to ensure that in every lesson pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn and how they will recognise success, have been instrumental in raising rates of progress. Overall, pupils, including the more able, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the small number who speak English as an additional language, make good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive. Pupils report that lessons are fun and that they particularly enjoy activities that are 'tricky'. This is evident in lessons, for example, when older pupils set out to investigate the shortest route for a spider to reach a fly on the opposite side of the room. The buzz of conversation showed a high level of interest and thought. Pupils are well behaved in lessons in and around school and they get on well together. The way older pupils get on with and support younger pupils is of particular note. Although, in the main, pupils concentrate well on what they do in class, their attention sometimes drops when the teacher either gives too much instruction at the beginning of lessons or interrupts their independent work when they are fully engaged.

Pupils are helped to know how to live healthily, and many do, especially with respect to enjoying physical activity, although a few are not yet as good at applying what they know about healthy eating to their everyday lives. Pupils like school very much and are anxious to play a full part in helping it to run well. They are also learning to be good citizens through, for example, the work they have done with the local

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council to maintain and improve the town park that serves as the school’s playground. Pupils’ positive behaviour and attitudes towards each other, as well as the curiosity they show about the world in which they live, are illustrative of their good social, moral and spiritual development. Although pupils show respect for the thoughts and ways of life of others, the school is right in wanting to develop their knowledge of different faiths and traditions still further. Attendance rates have improved to average levels. Pupils’ attainment and their abilities to work cooperatively as well as independently, and to enjoy a sense of challenge, are preparing them well for their future lives. These are aspects about which parents and carers are particularly positive. However, there remain a few pupils for whom progress is limited because of less regular attendance.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The way the curriculum is enriched by special activities, often outside school, and the way that teachers try hard to make lessons interesting and exciting, are successful in engaging and motivating pupils. Working on interesting topics is providing pupils with a context that enables them to see the relevance of what they learn. There are many occasions when pupils can practise reading and writing through their work in different subjects. Learning to take notes about different aspects of medicine in an English lesson, for example, provided pupils with the information they needed upon which to base the production of short, informative computer clips in a history lesson. This cross-subject work is not, however, quite as well developed for mathematics.

Lessons are well planned and based on the accurate knowledge of the attainment

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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and needs of each pupil. Consequently, they present pupils of different abilities with appropriately pitched levels of challenge. Teachers deploy the skills of well-trained teaching assistants effectively, especially in ensuring that less-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped to make good progress. High challenge in lessons is also enabling more-able pupils to make good progress, so that an increasing number are attaining higher levels by the time they leave the school. It is because they are anxious to ensure maximum progress that teachers sometimes over instruct or interrupt pupils unnecessarily, although there are also odd occasions when an additional intervention would support quicker learning. It is this lack of finer judgement, that is currently preventing teaching from being outstanding. Teachers provide pupils with very good feedback both orally and through marking. This combines with an effective system for the setting of targets, which means that pupils can articulate what it is they need to do to improve their work. This actively encourages a sense of personal responsibility and is a particularly good feature of the school’s provision.

Wide-ranging systems for ensuring that pupils are personally supported are very successful in promoting security and well-being. Pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable are sensitively aided to overcome difficulties or disabilities. Systems to encourage better attendance have been successful in raising this from a low point two years ago so that it is now average, but there is scope for the school to better use the data it has about attendance to investigate how it could be further improved.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Drive and ambition to improve is evident at every level of the school and the energy this has generated is used well to promote the improvements made in many aspects of the school since its previous inspection. School self-evaluation has been improved, in particular, by the development of the role played by a greater number of teachers, both from The Erme and from other schools in the federation. Work, for example to improve the teaching of the sounds that different combination of letters make (phonics), can be seen to be having an impact on the quality of teaching and, as a result, on increased progress. This partnership creating a wider school team has enabled the school to very accurately judge its effectiveness and to know what improvements have been needed. To date, however, the use of data has been largely focused on provision for the individual and this has been successful in

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improving progress to its current good level. Data have not yet been fully utilised to look at overall attainment and progress at a more strategic level, so that provision can be further fine-tuned, for example to look at the progress of older and younger pupils in the mixed-age classes or the effect of less than optimal attendance on pupils’ progress. The focus on the individual has, however, helped the school promote good equality of opportunity.

The headteacher and staff are well supported by good governance. Governors understand the balance between supporting the school and holding it to account, and use both to good effect. They have played an important part in ensuring the successful federation, but are correct in identifying that they need to develop their role a little by developing a more systematic and manageable approach to gathering information about each of the schools separately as well as across the federation. The need to safeguard pupils is taken very seriously, and both parents and pupils agree that this is successfully promoted. The school has developed community cohesion well through the links with the other federated schools and is helping pupils gain a wider perspective through, for example, links with a school in Uganda. It has very productive links with a wide range of partners beyond the federation, providing, for example, extended opportunities for sport. The school is outward- as well as inward-looking. It provides advice for other schools with respect to the teaching of mathematics and providing student teachers with a good place in which to develop their skills. All these links provide benefits to the school that could otherwise not be afforded.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception class but, because they enter with less than expected attainment, with sometimes particularly poor communication and

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language skills, many do not quite reach expected levels by the end of the year. They do, however, settle well into school and systematically build basic skills, which gives them a good platform upon which to base their continued good progress in Years 1 and 2. Provision is good, the children are provided with suitable opportunities to work inside and outside, to work directly with adults and to initiate their own learning. For example, children enjoyed a whole-class activity with the teachers modelling the use of coins to pay in the class ‘shop’ and then later, were observed playing productively and independently using these skills. Overall, there is a good balance of such activities, but as in the rest of the school, there are occasions when introductions to lessons are too long or when there is too much adult intervention when children could be working independently. Strong assessment procedures, which include some exceptionally good record keeping, show that adults know the children well and help them to progress. The good care and support provided for all pupils in the school includes those in the Reception Year and this means that they are happy, safe and secure. Good leadership and strong vision for development has ensured the maintenance of the quality of provision despite a relatively large number of staffing changes over the last two years.

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

An average number of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. These parents and carers are very happy with the education provided for their child. They are particularly positive about the way their child is kept safe, the way they are helped to support their child at home and the way their child is prepared for the next steps of their education. They also report that their child likes school. Inspectors agree with these positive views. A very small number of parents and carers are less happy about the way the school is led and managed, but comments relating to this concerned the amount of time the headteacher is present in the school. During the inspection, the inspection team found that the federation of schools is having very positive effects on the progress pupils are making and that the school is run well when the headteacher is at another of the schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Erme 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 127 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	59	20	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	67	16	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	28	57	18	37	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	53	18	37	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	57	18	37	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	28	57	21	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	63	17	35	1	2	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)	28	57	21	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	30	61	16	33	3	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	41	24	49	4	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	49	22	45	0	0	3	6
The school is led and managed effectively	24	49	20	41	2	4	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	28	57	21	43	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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



24 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Erme Primary School, Ivybridge PL21 0AJ

We really enjoyed our time in your school and we want to thank you for giving us your opinions in such a friendly, polite way. You will be pleased to know that we agree that yours is a good school.

These are some of the things we liked best.

- You make good progress in reading, writing and in mathematics.
- You behave well, work hard and want to succeed.
- You receive good teaching that helps you to be interested in what you are doing.
- Your teachers give you good information about how well you are doing and how you could make your work better.
- Everyone in school takes good care of each and every one of you.
- There is very good teamwork between the staff at your school and those in the other schools in your federation, and this is helping to find more ways for you to make better progress. Outstanding links with others mean that the school can provide you with many exciting and interesting activities.
- Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body have worked hard to make improvements to the education you receive.

To make things even better, we have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do these things.

- Make sure that your teachers choose when are the best times to talk to you during lessons so that they help you to learn as much as you can.
- Use the information they gather about you to find more ways of helping you make even better progress, including making sure that everything is done to raise rates of attendance.

All of you can help to do these things by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you again for making us welcome in your school. We wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Onions
Lead inspector

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