



Stoke Hill Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113086
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289504
Inspection date 9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Hulme

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Stoke Hill
School category	Community		Exeter
Age range of pupils	5-7		EX4 7DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01392 258894
Number on roll (school)	235	Fax number	01392 210208
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vanessa Newcombe
		Headteacher	Heather Tozer
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average-sized school was previously a First School and took children up to eight years old. The school has only had infant status for a year following reorganisation in Exeter. Consequently, the roll has dropped. Children come from a very wide social mix of families and the intake is somewhat different since the last inspection. The majority of children are White British and a fifth come from other ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. There are 10 children at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities matches the national average. The school's success has been recognised with awards such as the renewal of the Quality Mark, Investors in People, Healthy Schools Award, high health and safety audit score and recent achievement of Travel Plan award. There is pre-school provision on site offering 26 places for 3-4 year olds, which is managed privately.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that succeeds in making learning irresistible. Children told the inspector, 'Work is fun, this is a really good school and nothing needs to be changed because when you grow up you can do lots of different things'. Parental involvement is exemplary. It is a key feature of the school ethos and has a very positive influence on helping children achieve as well as they do. On the day of the inspection, parents were visiting Year 1 numeracy sessions to deepen their own understanding of what their children are taught. It is an exciting place to be and its continual success since the last inspection is testimony to its capacity to improve further. A group of parents talked about its flexibility in adapting to the changing needs of their children.

Children achieve well. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average and children do particularly well in reading and science. Children make good progress overall, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school is aware that some things could be better and that some improved resources for purposeful play are required to maintain the good provision for the Foundation Stage.

The wonderfully caring and supportive atmosphere provides a firm foundation for pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Excellent relationships between children and adults are reflected in the trust they have in staff. Children say they feel secure and happy. They enjoy their learning immensely and find lessons interesting because they are always learning new things.

Overall, teaching is good. The very good relationships that pupils have with adults motivate them to work hard, and their very good attitudes to tasks and excellent behaviour mean that there is no disruption and work is completed. The good assessment procedures and tracking of progress mean that children have a good knowledge of how well they are doing. Children understand their targets and explain what they have to do to improve. Teachers use information from assessments well and consequently plan lessons that are challenging and foster perseverance. Although lessons in Reception classes show uniformity in planning, occasionally there are inconsistencies in organisation, pace and management which slow progress during those lessons. The good curriculum has some outstanding features such as the additional learning opportunities and the development of the outdoor classroom. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support for each child stems from very good contributions from staff and parents. Safeguarding children is of paramount importance. Leadership and management are good and beginning to excel. The headteacher provides outstanding direction and a very clear vision for the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- eradicate inconsistencies in teaching Reception children so that all progress is at least good
- improve the learning environment for the Foundation Stage, ensuring that purposeful play is a regular part of every child's day.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well because teaching is good and the leadership keeps a vigilant eye on progress, stepping in quickly to ensure that individual needs can be met and supported. Consequently, all groups of children make good progress and achieve success. When pupils start school, many have difficulties with communication skills, and listening skills are not well developed. Almost half lack the social skills expected for four-year-olds. They make good progress and most reach expected standards when they start Year 1. However, a significant group are still working towards their writing skills. Good progress continues and by the time they leave school, standards are above average. Children do particularly well in reading and science, with a third reaching the higher level. Of particular note in the wider curriculum are good standards in art, and progression is clearly evident as children build on skills as they move through school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The very caring ethos is the foundation for children's outstanding personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school values its rich cultural background and celebrates a range of religious and cultural events. Assembly themes promote all aspects of personal development, including awareness of the environment, being a good citizen and working harmoniously. Skills and competencies that equip children to work together in future include making decisions, collaborating, negotiating and working together. They have a growing understanding of their rights and responsibilities and enjoy contributing to school development through the school council.

Many initiatives exist to extend physical activity include two hours of PE each week.

The very good attendance shows how much children love school. They have considerable confidence in the adults who work with them and reported that they feel safe and secure. As they grow older, they gain an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, know how to stay safe and are tremendously involved in the local community. Preparation for future life gives an emphasis to literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Children said, 'Computers are fabulous, we love that work'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, teaching is good. This is not the whole story because during the inspection, some outstanding practice was observed. This stems from very strong subject knowledge and teaching is infectious so children are enthused, engaged and challenged. Most children are attentive, enjoy their learning, and take care to present their work as well

as they can. They are eager to respond to questions. Good planning based on stages of learning means that every child can achieve success, and self-esteem is raised. Occasional inconsistencies related to organisation, pace and pupil management makes progress in Reception lessons satisfactory rather than good.

Challenging targets in literacy and numeracy are having an impact. Children's learning is sharply analysed and the information gathered is used effectively to meet the full range of children's needs. There are examples of very informative marking that make very clear what children have achieved and what they need to do next. Children had many comments about marking, which they found helpful. They explained the 'next step' comments, written in green, which as one child put it, 'It kind of helps you do your work better and greens are good for you'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular provision is good. Children come from a varying range of backgrounds and the broad curriculum meets the needs of them all. This is the result of new initiatives such as extending the ways in which children at all stages of learning arrive at numeracy solutions, and developing the school grounds as an outdoor classroom. The Foundation Stage curriculum is planned well and uses practical activities effectively given its current resources. However, during the inspection, activities using play were not much in evidence during a literacy lesson and some children who had just started school were unable to benefit from them. Some resources are extremely aged and the learning environment was less inviting than it might have been. The school is aware and plans to rejuvenate this area as part of the new development that includes a nursery.

Outstanding extra-curricular activities include those not readily available in other schools such as horse riding (121 children learned to ride), foreign languages, drumming, orchestra and Tai Chi. Every day, when they arrive, children and their parents work together on work related to the first lesson of the day. Effective use is made of 'artists in residence' to extend learning opportunities. Visits outside the school extend children's understanding of the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for each child is exemplary because of very effective contributions from staff and parents. A wide range of intervention programmes for the LDD and EAL children are an important factor in ensuring they meet success. Learning support staff are well briefed and provide the right level of support that enables these children to achieve well. Those with special talents have a chance to work with others who enjoy the same activities. Safeguarding children is regarded as a high priority and robust arrangements to maintain high quality care are in place. Work undertaken for risk assessments is exemplary. Great involvement with parents has resulted in immense trust in the school as parents now feel enabled to support their children at home and have the training to take part in educational visits. A new system of EAL parental support is amongst the many initiatives to involve parents in

their children's learning. Academic guidance based on a rigorous programme of assessment enables staff to keep a very good check on children's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management stems from a strong and caring headteacher who leads the staff team very successfully and is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Reorganisation, resulting in the reduction of 90 children from the school roll, has been handled well. The very experienced headteacher responds very well to children's needs. The headteacher's good direction and very clear vision for irresistible learning is one of the main reasons that the school is starting to excel. Leadership of the coordinator for special educational needs is exemplary. The very good work by the EAL coordinator with children and their parents enables these children to take a full part in all activities provided by the school. Both roles are particularly effective in promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that all children achieve as well as they can. The deputy headteacher is a vigorous assessment co-ordinator whose leadership has contributed effectively to the good teaching and academic guidance. There is no specific leader of the Foundation Stage at present owing to much reduced finances following the re-organisation of Exeter Schools. It is intended to appoint a Foundation Stage Co-ordinator next term to lead the Nursery and Foundation Stage.

Recent changes to the governing body have presented a wonderful challenge to work in a more interactive way. There are effective systems for checking the school's work and new governors are becoming more skilled in this aspect. Governors are well informed and, with staff, have identified those practices in need of review and further development. The school knows itself well. The effective self-evaluation results in a school that continually refines its practice in the light of new initiatives and responses from children, staff and parents. Recognition of the importance of the Foundation Stage has already led to good preparation for the new nursery in 2008, including planning for provision.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. Your willingness to talk to me was a great help and I enjoyed listening to you explain your work and tell me what you really liked about your school.

I am very pleased to tell you that you go to a good school. In fact, I remember that you told me the school was really good and nothing needed to be changed but it might be nice to learn some other languages. You particularly liked the clubs and exciting things you are given to do. I couldn't agree more!

These are the things I particularly want to celebrate:

- you behave very well and show interest in your work. You told me work was fun and lessons were never boring. I remember you said that ICT was fabulous and you loved the computers but sometimes they broke down so you were having new ones
- you try hard and reach good standards. You do really well at reading and science
- the teaching is good. You get on very well with your teachers and really know what you are expected to learn. You explained about the comments in your books and how they help you make your work even better
- if you need extra help, the school makes sure you get it, and some of you with special talents have a chance to work with others who enjoy the same activities
- you have an excellent headteacher who works hard to make learning irresistible. She is always trying to make the school even better and one of which you can be proud.

Even in good schools like yours, there are always things that can be made better, and there are a few things that staff will be working to improve in the Reception area so that the children's progress is always as good as it can be and that the children have some new play equipment and get ready for the new nursery that is going to be built. I know that some of you like a challenge so I hope you will help the adults.