

Ottery St Mary Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113105
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289510
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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 on roll	
School	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Panizzi
Headteacher	J D Rylance
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Longdogs Lane Ottery St Mary EX11 1HY
Telephone number	01404 812977
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ottery St Mary is a large primary school. Most pupils are White British although there are a small number from other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of children joining the school other than at the start of the Foundation Stage is above average. The proportion of pupils with statements of need for their learning difficulties and disabilities is average. Children start school in Reception with skills and abilities that are generally in line with those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ottery St Mary Primary School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Central to the success is its excellent leadership and management. The headteacher provides commendable leadership to the school ensuring that it has a strong focus on raising standards. Senior staff and subject leaders similarly provide very clear direction within their areas of responsibility. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and a clear vision for future development. All pupils including those from minority ethnic groups, those newly arrived and those of different abilities feel welcomed and so want to learn. Most parents are pleased with the school's provision for their children. One parent captured the mood of parents when they wrote, 'I couldn't be happier with the level of teaching and care that my child receives'.

Pupils really enjoy their education and this is reflected by high levels of attendance and promptness. Parents play their part well in this and through their support for homework. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils have good attitudes towards developing healthy lifestyles. They fully understand how to keep safe. Children make very good progress in their personal and social skills in the Foundation Stage. Older pupils make a good contribution to the community through positions of responsibility such as school council members, members of the choir and sports leaders. However, not enough pupils get an opportunity to play their part in helping the school get better. The school has worked effectively on encouraging listening and speaking skills and this supports some excellent social development.

Pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are excellent and they attain very high standards in these subjects. This is the result of good teaching and good provision for those at risk of falling behind or who have difficulty with learning. The boys' standards in writing, although above average, are not as high as girls' or those they reach in mathematics and science. A good curriculum is effectively meeting their needs and they are on course to meet challenging targets. There are missed opportunities to add extra challenge to all pupils' work in writing and mathematics in the way the current curriculum is organised. There is satisfactory emphasis on learning about people in other parts of the world but not enough to promote a greater understanding of the cultural diversity of modern society. None the less with high levels in basic skills, including information and communication technology skills, combined with excellent attitudes and behaviour the pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

School self-evaluation is of high quality. Purposeful action by school leaders has led to significant improvements in achievement, teaching, learning and leadership and management since the last inspection. The governors act as a critical friend and are conscientious in ensuring statutory duties are fulfilled and the school's resources matched to what the school wants to achieve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

This area of the school has a knowledgeable leader who has developed a well-organised and motivated team. Together they provide a calm, safe and stimulating environment for the children. Children thrive in this environment. The team assesses children thoroughly so that they know how to manage the next steps in their learning. There are very good links with parents and children settle in well and know routines. Lively well-organised teaching ensures that children make good progress and successfully prepares them for Year 1. The recent

investment in staff to enable smaller class groups is benefiting the youngest children. There are plenty of good experiences for children to explore and take charge of their own learning. Sometimes the adults working with children miss these opportunities. The outdoor area is used well to develop children's personal, physical and creative development. It is well resourced and children have easy and regular access to it. The particular focus on the development of early writing skills and teaching of sounds has successfully developed children's confidence as 'writers'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils more in school improvement.
- Enrich and enhance the curriculum so that it provides more opportunities for pupils to use their core skills in other subject areas and for pupils to learn about the diversity of cultural backgrounds of people living in Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve very well to reach standards that are well above average at the end of Year 6. Most children start school in Reception with attainment that is as expected for their age; some are lower in personal and social development and creative skills. They make good progress in all areas of learning. By the start of Year 1, nearly all have achieved the standards expected and many have exceeded them. The progress the majority make by the end of Year 2 is very good and continues in Years 3 to 6. For the last four years pupils' attainment has been significantly higher than average. Most of the lower attaining pupils at the end of Year 2 make exceptional progress to reach average, and in a majority of cases above average, standards by Year 6. In 2007 English and science tests, the majority of pupils reached the highest Level 5. Fewer of the boys reach the highest levels in writing compared to girls and this is also the case at the end of Year 2. The school has organised teaching in Year 2 and Year 6 to ensure more focus can be given to challenging boys in order for them to reach the higher levels. Interim data provided by the school show this is working. The highly effective settling-in arrangement for pupils joining during the year ensures they too make good progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality and well targeted support and make good progress. There is good extra support for those few pupils who are learning English as an additional language and they make progress similar to their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Classrooms are characterised by very well motivated, attentive and well behaved pupils enjoying their learning. Spiritual, social and moral development is good. Pupils' understanding of cultural development is satisfactory but a less well developed aspect of their personal development. The calm and well ordered manner pupils go about school typifies the respect the pupils have for each other. They work responsibly together and express their views confidently in front of classmates and to adults. A small minority have the opportunity to develop these skills in the wider school community, for example helping as sports coaches to ensure that playtimes run smoothly, library monitors or as members of the eco club. The work of the school council is in its infancy and representation is limited. Pupils show a good commitment to healthy living by choosing to eat and drink healthily, although they are capable of taking on more responsibility, through, for example, a healthy tuck shop. A large majority of pupils choose to take part in the good number of extra-curricular clubs available mainly to older pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and this sets a positive tone for learning. Teachers generally plan work that is closely matched to pupils' individual abilities and consequently progress is often rapid in lessons. Teaching assistants are well informed about what pupils are expected to learn from activities and have a good level of expertise in the areas they are working. All teachers are good at engaging pupils in talking to help them develop their ideas and choice of vocabulary. This encourages them to organise their writing effectively. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their skills through investigation and problem solving. This was seen to good effect in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 6 when preparing to present their solutions to investigation work. Thought provoking class discussions combined with effective use of interactive whiteboards motivate and inspire pupils. In one lesson high quality discussion in pairs helped pupils appreciate and interpret an extract from Tom Sawyer. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and provide targets for improvement that are regularly reviewed with pupils. In some lessons, questions and discussions are not challenging enough to help the teachers assess and deepen pupils' understanding of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy and scientific and thinking skills leads to excellent progress in these areas. Pupils are beginning to make use of these skills to support their work in other subjects but this not always planned for in a systematic way. Nonetheless, the school has made good strides in improving the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection and it now meets pupils' needs well. For example, all pupils have the opportunity to learn to play musical instruments in Year 3 and Year 5 and the school provides all pupils with two hours sport a week. Information and communication technology has a prominent place on the timetable and pupils are making good progress in these skills. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme contributes effectively to pupils' good understanding of being healthy and safe. A good range of popular extra-curricular clubs enriches the curriculum. These activities along with residential visits provide good support for pupils' social development and add greatly to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides very strong academic support and guidance. A comprehensive range of strategies is well established to keep track of pupils' progress. Skilled support is provided to help pupils reach demanding targets. The recent introduction of unit assessments linked to National Curriculum levels in mathematics has helped pick up problems pupils may be having sooner. Individual targets, group targets and individual education plans are regularly reviewed and information shared between adults and pupils. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Adults are conscientious about the care and safety of the pupils. Procedures are rigorous and effective in ensuring that the school is a safe place. Staff and the pupils look out for those who are newly arrived at the school so they feel safe and settled. The overwhelming majority of parents are confident that their children are well

cared for and lend their support to the reading and homework programme that has helped boost achievement. Despite the school's best efforts a few are not always clear what action the school is taking to address concerns they may have.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Managing change is well considered and based on evidence from regular and thorough evaluation. Middle leaders are highly effective in leading and developing strategies to raise standards and ensure that all pupils make the very best progress they can. They routinely check on the impact of the action taken to improve provision in the school. The headteacher sets high expectations of all his staff and their work is monitored regularly by subject leaders and through observing teaching, discussions with pupils and analysis of pupils' progress. Training programmes to support new approaches to learning are timely and focused. The staff work extremely well as a team and as a consequence high expectations of behaviour and hard work are met. Systems for managing strategic development are well established. Governors are very involved in this. The organised programme of visits allows them to raise the critical questions that serve as an additional level of monitoring. Even the most recent staff have acquired considerable skills in monitoring and evaluating school effectiveness through shared observations and analysis of data. Consequently, excellent capacity for further improvements is in no doubt.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ottery St Mary Primary School, Ottery St Mary, EX11 1HY

We were very pleased to visit your school. You made us feel really welcome. We think you go to a good school. You all make excellent progress in your reading, writing and mathematics. I was very impressed with all that has happened since your last inspection.

- You all work extremely hard in your lessons and your behaviour in and around the school is excellent.
- Your teachers and support staff work very hard and are good at helping you reach good standards in all your work.
- You really enjoy school. We know this because the vast majority of you always attend school and you all appear very happy and safe.
- I enjoyed listening to you talk about the environment and how you can make the world a better place for us all to live in. I hope the children in Year 1 have success with their seeds they planted and the school garden flourishes again this year. I enjoyed reading the thoughtful messages written by Year 3 pupils.
- We were very impressed with the way you worked together in lessons.
- The headteacher, staff and governors manage the school very well indeed. They are especially good at checking up on what is working.

I have asked the teachers to do a few things:

- Provide more planned opportunities for you to use your English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills in more interesting and varied ways.
- Find ways of giving more of you an opportunity to make the school an even better place. You can help with this by continuing to come up with 'good ideas'.

Well done and I wish you all the very best.

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