



# Neroche Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 123673  
**Local Authority** Somerset  
**Inspection number** 292742  
**Inspection dates** 14–15 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Martin Kerly

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	Broadway
<b>School category</b>	Community		Ilminster
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		TA19 9RG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01460 52664
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	162	<b>Fax number</b>	01460 52664
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mike Liggins
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 September 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds in a scattered and rural area. Few are from families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Almost all the pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and physical disabilities is lower than the national average. Children's attainment on entry to the school is a little above average. Most of the teachers, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have been appointed during the last two years. The Investors in People award was renewed in October 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is now improving following a period of uncertainty when it lost its sense of direction. This improvement is directly linked to the appointment of new staff, particularly the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school has a number of strengths including the pupils' good personal development and the broad range of planned curriculum experiences. It is responding purposefully to some long-standing weaknesses including slow progress made by too many pupils in their first few years in the school. However, some pupils have not yet caught up to their full potential, particularly in the standard of their writing.

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory and overall standards are average. In recent years, standards declined from above average by the end of Years 2 and 6 to close to average in national assessments in 2006. This decline was related to frequent changes within the teaching staff and uncertainties in leadership. Some of this decline in standards has been reversed and this year standards are set to rise again, particularly by the end of Reception and Year 6. Standards in writing throughout the school remain lower than in other subjects. Children in the Foundation Stage are now making good progress following a significant improvement in the quality of teaching. Overall, however, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Whilst there is some good and outstanding teaching, pupils' learning in too many lessons is only satisfactory because activities are not always matched carefully enough to different needs. The curriculum has developed rapidly and is good with innovative links between subjects. Whilst pupils are well cared for and supported effectively throughout the school day, the academic guidance they receive is not as strong because insufficient use is made of performance data when tracking pupils' progress and setting targets, and in some classes their work is not marked in sufficient detail to explain how they can improve.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership team has successfully raised expectations across the school and created a more united staff team. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a mainly accurate view of its performance. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of systematic and rigorous checking on the school's performance, including monitoring lessons and the progress being made by all groups of pupils. Improvements since the last inspection have accelerated in the last two years and the school has a satisfactory capacity to maintain further improvement, although written plans for responding to the main priorities are very brief and lack sufficient detail to demonstrate how weaknesses are to be overcome.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by raising teachers' expectations and improving the guidance on writing offered to pupils in their classrooms.
- Improve teaching and learning by making sure activities are more carefully matched to the needs of different abilities within the class and pupils receive detailed feedback on how they can improve their work.

- Carry out systematic and rigorous checks on the performance of the school, including the quality of lessons and the analysis of assessment data, in order to identify more precisely the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Make sure there are clear and sufficiently detailed plans to explain exactly how priorities are to be achieved over the next year or two.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The achievement of boys and girls of all abilities is satisfactory. Standards are in line with the national average at the end of Year 6, although in Years 2 and 3 they remain below average in writing, following previous slow progress in this key skill. Children leaving Reception now have above average attainment in most aspects of their learning and are poised to do well in Years 1 and 2, unlike many pupils now in Years 2 and 3 who made inadequate progress during their first years in the school. These pupils are now making satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in reading, but some are still operating at lower levels than they should be. Expectations of older pupils are also being raised and pupils in Years 5 and 6 are now largely on track to reach targets and standards above the national average, especially in mathematics and science. Progress in writing, although now satisfactory, is not as fast as in other subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy their time in the school and being part of a large family. Attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they benefit from the family ethos successfully promoted by all staff and appreciated by parents. One parent summed this up by writing: 'The staff know all the children, not just their own class, and the children from Reception to Year 6 all know one another and appear to mix well.' This is further developed by the way older pupils keenly take on responsibilities, caring for younger ones and contributing well to the school community. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved. It is now good and the very small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour are very well supported. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and keeping themselves safe, and are enthused and inspired by the outstanding contribution by the playleader at lunchtimes. They are gaining a satisfactory range of skills needed for the next phase of education and adult life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The teacher has high expectations of the children in the Reception class. The children enjoy their learning because they are presented with a good range of activities following

careful observations and assessments by the teacher and assistant. In Years 1 to 6, most of the teaching is satisfactory. Some outstanding features in teaching were seen in a Year 4/5 class, where pupils were inspired by the enthusiasm and imaginative approaches of the teacher, and helped by the exceptionally clear way methods of solving problems were explained and displayed. Elsewhere, too many lessons, whilst satisfactory, do not inspire the pupils. In some, there are periods where they are all expected to listen to the teacher, even though the most able have already demonstrated full understanding of what is being taught, or the least able are unable to follow the complexity of the concept. Work completed by the oldest pupils is often un-dated and not marked by the teacher, giving little help to pupils about how to improve. Some effective systems for assessing writing have been introduced and are beginning to help raise expectations, but some classrooms for younger pupils do not contain enough prompts and guidance to help them with their writing.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership team has worked effectively to strengthen the curriculum. New approaches have been established to make links between different subjects and help pupils see the connections. Teachers' own interests and expertise are being used well, for example, links with Uganda, Germany and France and the introduction of modern foreign languages from Year 3. There is a very effective programme to promote pupils' personal, social and emotional development. This contributes well to the pupils' good personal development and is enabling the tiny minority of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties to become full members of the school community. The outdoor provision for the youngest children is limited but plans are well advanced to improve this, and the school is working effectively to extend pupils' use of computers. Opportunities for writing across the curriculum are missed in some classes. There is a good range of activities beyond the classroom and a group of pupils, when asked about the recent residential visit to Osmington Bay, said in chorus, 'It was awesome!'

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils feel well cared for and supported within the school's family atmosphere. Older ones care for younger ones and all benefit from the good relationships with the staff. Very skilled guidance and support are provided for the most vulnerable pupils during lessons and in the playground. The school systematically implements the statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils and there is an ongoing training programme. Most pupils know about their short-term curricular targets but inconsistencies in marking of their work mean they are not always clear about how to improve and longer-term targets are not always based on accurate and relevant assessments. The school does not analyse the progress of those pupils involved in short-term recovery programmes to help decide if such help should be repeated or extended.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The present leadership team has worked effectively to reverse a previous decline in the school. The headteacher has successfully promoted links with other schools and organisations to the benefit of pupils, for example, the 'Gifted and talented' pentagon days and links with the local sports college. New staff appointments and agreed school policies have begun to strengthen practice. Pupils' good behaviour, based on clear expectations and an extensive rewards system, is a direct result of higher and more consistent expectations. Staff are becoming clear about their roles and responsibilities within a team approach and there is a good programme of staff training addressing the most important aspects of school life. There are developing systems for checking the work of the school but these are not yet systematic enough. Although the headteacher has an accurate overview of teaching and standards, there is insufficient detailed analysis or feedback to enable an accurate focus on the precise issues needing improvement. Development planning lacks detail to explain, for example, who is going to do what, and by when, in order to improve the standard in writing. The governing body is relatively new and inexperienced. The new chair is well supported by the vice-chair and together, they have a good understanding of the role of governors.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 for welcoming us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a satisfactory school which is improving. We are pleased to say there are several aspects that are good but there are also some things which need to get better. Here are some of the 'highlights':

- you behave well in class and around the school and take good care of each other
- you make at least satisfactory progress in lessons; those of you in Reception and in the Year 4/5 class make good progress
- at playtime, you have a great time when working with the playleader
- your teachers plan lots of interesting activities beyond the classroom and often involve experts from outside to work with you
- everyone in the school cares well for you and helps to keep you safe
- your headteacher and deputy headteacher are working effectively to make the school even better. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on these four things:
- help you all to make more progress with your writing
- make sure all teachers think about how they can make your work not too hard or too easy and explain to you how you can improve your work
- carry out more careful checks on how well the school is doing
- write down in more detail exactly what needs to be done to make the school even better.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at Neroche Primary School. You can help your teachers by trying even harder with your writing.