

Exwick Heights Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134172
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	294113
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Lee

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 on roll	
School	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	L Burbridge
Headteacher	Lorraine Dunn
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Exwick Hill Exwick Exeter EX4 2BG
Telephone number	01392 273635
Fax number	01392 498092

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Inspection number	294113

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an above average sized primary school with its own Nursery. It opened in September 2005 following amalgamation of Foxhayes First School and Exwick Middle School. It continues to occupy these two schools' sites until a new building is ready in December 2007. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a small number representing a range of minority ethnic groups. A very small proportion of these pupils have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

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 successful amalgamation that has quickly produced a good school. This owes much to excellent leadership by the headteacher, whose drive and vision have united staff, governors, parents and pupils so that all are working to common aims. Pupils' academic achievement and standards, as well as their personal development and well-being, are good overall with some aspects being outstanding.

Achievement and standards are improving although pupils make more progress in some year groups than others. Children's attainment is below expected levels when they enter the Foundation Stage and many nursery children's language and social skills are poor. Good provision helps them to progress well. Most achieve, and a good proportion exceed, the standards that are expected nationally at the end of the Reception Year but some weaknesses remain in reading and writing. Many pupils maintain good progress in Years 1 and 2 but, although standards are rising gradually by the end of Year 2, teachers' expectations are not high enough, especially of what can be achieved by the more able pupils. Progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 to a point where it is outstanding in Years 5 and 6. This is due to the very high quality of teaching of the oldest pupils, resulting in standards by the end of Year 6 that are well above national averages.

Teaching and learning are generally good but vary between year groups. A strength throughout the school is the good partnership between teachers and teaching assistants. It leads to a high quality of support for the many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few with English as an additional language, and is the main reason why all these pupils achieve well. There are inconsistencies in teachers' marking of work, which does not always guide pupils sufficiently on how work can be improved. This makes academic guidance satisfactory although care, guidance and support are good overall due to the high quality of pastoral care. Variable quality of teaching is not only reflected in the pupils' varying achievement but is also seen in the pupils' personal development. Behaviour and attitudes are good, but exemplary in Years 5 and 6. All pupils enjoy school but it is the oldest who are most excited by their learning. There are some whole school strengths in personal development, notably the extent to which the pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices in and out of school. This is due to the school's excellent provision in these areas within a good curriculum and the extensive range of opportunities for additional learning activities outside the school day.

School reorganisation has given many staff and governors new responsibilities and they are quickly becoming effective in these roles. This makes leadership and management good overall. Where senior management sees comparative weaknesses, the school quickly identifies what needs improving in teaching and learning and successfully raises standards. This is currently occurring in mathematics and writing in particular. Additionally, previously low achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) has been turned around and is now a strength.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 to raise their expectations of the pupils' achievement and standards in literacy and numeracy, ensuring in particular that the more able pupils are suitably challenged by their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There is a trend over time of lower attainment when children start in the Foundation Stage but the good standards by the time the pupils leave Year 6 reflect good achievement in relation to starting points. The few pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. Many other groups of pupils, including the significant proportion with learning difficulties across the school, also make good progress but there are variations between age groups.

At the end of the Foundation Stage, many children's attainment is above expected levels in all aspects of learning except their language development, which is below expected levels. National assessments at the end of Year 2 show standards are improving very gradually over time. The 2007 assessments are slightly better overall than in 2006 and standards are at levels expected nationally in reading and mathematics but below national expectations in writing. However, some Year 2 pupils, especially the more able, are not achieving the highest standards of which they are capable because teachers' expectations are not high enough. There is a developing trend of rising standards by the end of Year 6. The 2006 national test results were well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. Improvement is evident this year and standards are now above average in writing and very high in reading, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is strongly promoted as soon as children start in the Foundation Stage and impacts well on their attitudes to school and their personal qualities. Pupils are very well mannered and friendly to visitors and keen to say what they like most about their school. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to express their feelings and by Year 6 they are confident, articulate and think they are very well prepared for secondary school. This is so, because their mature social skills and good basic literacy and numeracy skills mean they are well prepared for future education and eventual economic well-being. Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their good rates of attendance. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. One girl said 'I love coming to school because I like being sociable.'

Pupils enjoy physical exercise and they show a very clear understanding of how to eat healthily and appreciate the tasty choices provided for lunch. Pupils' good understanding of safe practices starts early in their school life. A nursery child said, 'We have to wash our hands before we make pastry (for jam tarts) to get rid of the germs.' The school councils carry out their duties enthusiastically and responsibly. The junior council's regular meetings with the chair of the governing body enable them to be fully involved in decisions about facilities and resources at the new school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality of teaching and learning, which is improving achievement and raising standards, nevertheless has variations in quality that limit the progress of some year groups. Teaching is outstanding in Years 5 and 6, good in the Foundation Stage and Years 3 and 4, and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. There are certain strengths throughout the school. Relationships between

teachers and pupils are good. Teachers make good use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to explain ideas clearly and imaginatively. Lessons end with pupils being given opportunities to reflect on how well they have achieved the objectives of the lesson. Skilled teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide good help for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and pupils with English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils are enthusiastic about their work and want to achieve.

Much work planned for pupils is carefully matched to their abilities although there is not always sufficient challenge in the literacy and numeracy activities given to pupils, particularly the most able, in Years 1 and 2. Teachers of these year groups are not making frequent enough references to the targets that have been set to improve the pupils' basic literacy skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a well planned balance between indoor and outdoor activities. There is a smooth transition into the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2, which is introduced when pupils are ready. Current curriculum development focuses on links between subjects for pupils in Years 3 to 6. There is already detailed planning of opportunities for pupils throughout the school to use ICT skills in other subjects but more work is needed on the application of literacy and numeracy skills.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of visits and special events. A weekly afternoon session when pupils of mixed ages work together in small groups gives further variety to the curriculum. The activities include art, craft, sport, citizenship and foreign languages and provide many stimulating learning experiences for pupils of all abilities. There is a very good range of clubs at lunchtimes and after school with a high take up of all activities offered. These develop pupils' physical, personal and social skills well and add to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults know pupils very well and have established good relationships with them and their parents. Pupils say all adults in the school are very kind and caring. Good pastoral care, guidance and support have a major influence on pupils' enjoyment of school and their good personal development. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are good, so pupils feel safe at school. Very good links with many agencies, including children and mental health support services, ensure that diverse needs are identified. Staff take full advantage of training in specific areas so that individual needs are met, for example for the significant numbers with autistic spectrum disorder.

There are inconsistencies in the specific, academic guidance that teachers give through their marking of pupils' work and the use of praise and encouragement. Younger pupils in particular are not given sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work and this slows down their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and her most able deputy headteacher work very well together. They monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and constantly check on pupils' standards and progress. As a consequence, pupils' achievement is being driven upwards. Data analysis by senior management is thorough and is used constructively to show where improvement can be made and to determine the action necessary to achieve this. Class teachers are not sufficiently involved in this analysis of information about pupil performance and this is recognised as an area for development.

Priority has been given to developing the leadership and management skills of staff with subject leadership responsibilities. Those new to their role are not sufficiently aware of the quality of provision and standards in their subjects across the whole school. The more experienced have a detailed knowledge of where improvement is needed and lead staff very successfully in carrying out action to raise standards. This is evident in the way that pupils' achievement in science and ICT has improved, and the good progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is good leadership of teaching assistants that contributes much to their effectiveness.

The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation judgements are accurate. The governing body is fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school, contributes well to school improvement planning and has effective strategies for monitoring the school's effectiveness. The school has a good capacity for further improvement in the future.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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?	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	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	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

Dear Children

Exwick Heights Primary School, Exwick, Devon EX4 2BG

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking with us so willingly. We thoroughly enjoyed joining you in lessons and seeing you at work. We think your school is doing a good job in helping you to learn. The school does many things well and some things are outstanding. This is what we particularly appreciated:

- Many of you are making good progress in your work.
- The pupils in Year 6 are reaching high standards, especially in reading, mathematics, ICT and science.
- You behave well and this makes your school a very friendly place.
- Most lessons are taught well and teachers work hard to plan interesting things for you to do in your lessons. This is helping you to learn well.
- The teachers and teaching assistants help those of you who find some of the work quite hard to do well.
- You have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise and about how to keep safe at school and home.
- All the adults look after you well and make sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The school is excellently led by your headteacher, and all the adults, including the governors, work well together to improve it.

We think your school could get even better if:

- the pupils in Years 1 and 2 are helped and encouraged to do even harder work, especially those who find their work easy.

We know you are excited about moving into the new school and we hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Exwick Heights Primary School an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Colin Lee Lead inspector