

Eastover Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123679
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	302782
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Bradley Simmons 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	404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Hocking
Headteacher	Malcolm Hector
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2001
School address	Wellington Road Bridgwater TA6 5EX
Telephone number	01278 422693
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Eastover Community Primary is a large school admitting up to two classes of children each year. It serves an economically deprived area of Bridgwater. A small proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Just under a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or other additional needs. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

The school has been a cause for concern to the local authority since 2006, and the permanent headteacher has been absent from the school since February 2007. Since that time, the deputy headteacher has been the interim headteacher, and all senior leadership positions at the school are currently held on a temporary basis.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Eastover Community Primary School is ineffective. Over time, the impact of teaching on learning is inadequate, so the rate of progress made by pupils, although slightly improved in some classes over recent months, is insufficient. Thus pupils do not attain the standards they could by the time they leave the school. In three out of the past four years, standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 6 were well below national averages. Standards at the end of Year 2 dipped significantly in 2007.

The temporary senior leadership team recognise that there are serious deficiencies in the quality of education provided. They demonstrate many good intentions and have worked to address the legacy of underachievement, but they lack the training, expertise, experience and focus to evaluate weaknesses, devise solutions and improve provision with the necessary speed and rigour. They have an unrealistic view of the quality of teaching and learning. Although teaching has a limited number of stronger features, pupils' exercise books and the school's data demonstrate that pupils are not progressing fast enough. No thorough analysis of the gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics has been carried out so teachers cannot plan accurately to plug the gaps in pupils' learning. In some classrooms, teachers' expectations of pupils are too low.

The curriculum is unbalanced and lacks relevance for pupils because it is not adapted to meet their needs. Some curricular initiatives have the potential to raise standards, but, because senior leaders are not holding teachers adequately to account for their work, these are inconsistently implemented and having limited impact on pupils' progress. In parallel classes, differing lengths of time are spent on the same subject for no good reason. For example, the length of time devoted to English in different classes varies by as much as two hours. The senior leadership team has failed to audit and remedy these disparities.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is inadequate. Pupils are not being taught the basic skills they need to make good progress in reading and writing at a fast enough rate. The gaps in their knowledge are not rigorously assessed and addressed so pupils underachieve in reading and writing as they move through the school. Several reading books are outdated. Provision to develop children's mathematical skills and provision for ensuring they learn outdoors are inadequate.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils do enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is generally good. They feel safe and note that bullying is rare and that the school deals with it effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to follow a healthy lifestyle, and they willingly raise money for charitable causes.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure and the interim headteacher has worked hard and to good effect to ensure the school now complies with health and safety legislation. However, academic guidance is a key weakness so care, guidance and support are inadequate overall.

The school has used a significant portion of its financial reserves to balance its budget this year. These reserves are dwindling yet there is no financial recovery plan to bring the school's expenditure into line with its income.

The limited progress that has been made in improving provision and the pupils' progress indicate that the senior leadership team capacity to improve the school is inadequate. The fact that the entire leadership team consists of temporary appointments serves only to underline the precarious state of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase pupils' progress and raise their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities.
- Improve teaching by assessing incisively the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and address these gaps at a more challenging rate.
- Ensure that all pupils have equitable access to a relevant and balanced curriculum.
- As a matter of urgency, build the capacity of leaders at all levels so that they are able to focus relentlessly on remedying the school's weaknesses, and can evaluate the impact of their work
- Devise and implement a financial recovery plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate. When they start school, children's knowledge, skills and abilities are below those normally expected. Over their first year, they make inadequate progress in the key areas of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

As they move through the rest of the school, pupils' progress varies unacceptably, and is inadequate overall. Although there has been some evidence of improving progress during the past six months, the school is not rigorously implementing agreed strategies for improvement to ensure that all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.

Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 over the past few years rose to meet national averages in 2006. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation in writing was exceptionally low. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 dipped significantly in 2007. At Key Stage 2, standards have generally been well below national averages over the past few years, and early indications are that they will not improve significantly in 2007. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties is inadequate although pupils with more significant needs benefit from the carefully planned extra support they receive, and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. The school has worked to good effect to ensure pupils behave well in lessons. Parents appreciate this. Where teaching fully engages pupils, their behaviour is impeccable. Around the school most pupils act safely and sensibly, and at sports afternoon they conducted themselves very well. Bullying is rare and, when it does occur, pupils are confident that it will be dealt with promptly. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They say they enjoy being in school and this is evident in the above average

attendance figure, and pupils' positive attitudes to learning even when teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils note that what they have learned about healthy foods has influenced what they eat.

Pupils' moral and social development is good but their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies are not held daily, so opportunities for spiritual reflection are limited. Visitors from various faith and minority ethnic backgrounds extend the pupils' cultural understanding, but there are few opportunities to learn about life in an increasingly diverse British society.

Some pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities; Year 6 pupils take on the job of 'problem patrol' in the playground. School council members feel their views are heard. Pupils are enthusiastic in working to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. However, pupils' weak basic skills mean that few are prepared adequately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. Teaching does not consistently enable all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. The level of challenge for pupils is too variable, and the support and focus pupils receive is inconsistent.

The teaching of phonics lacks rigour and the pace is too slow over time. Some pupils have not grasped basic phonetic skills by the time they reach Year 6 and this key weakness is not being satisfactorily addressed.

There is some evidence of good practice, but insufficient monitoring by senior management means that these strengths are not built upon, and crucially, weaknesses in teaching have not been identified or tackled. Weak assessment has led to weak planning so tasks are not adequately matched to pupils' needs. Some teachers have no clear understanding of what constitutes good progress during lessons. As a result, their expectations are too low and pupils either struggle or coast. Some teachers' are too accepting of low standards and poor presentation. Errors and omissions in marking and assessment also reveal weaknesses in the knowledge of individual staff. There is often too much direction from the teacher and too few opportunities for pupils to learn independently or take responsibility for what they do. Teaching assistants are not given guidance on how to address pupils' particular learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate and does not enable pupils to make the progress of which they are capable or prepare them for the next stage in their education. It lacks relevance and balance. The school does not have an overview or curriculum plan to ensure continuity and progression. Current curricular arrangements do not secure a basic entitlement for all pupils and are not matched to the needs of individual learners. Links between subjects are at an early stage of development. For example, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects beyond English. Pupils enjoy a satisfactory range of after-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are inadequate. The weakest area is academic guidance where pupils do not receive sufficient support to achieve in line with their capabilities. Marking is variable. While some is regular, helpful and encouraging, other marking does not comment on poorly presented work and does not provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve. Reports to parents are too descriptive. In some year groups they do not provide parents with clear guidance on how their children are achieving against national expectations.

The interim headteacher has worked to good effect to address health and safety matters. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet legal requirements. Risk assessments are carried out before school trips and teachers show appropriate concern for pupils' safety in entering and leaving the classroom. The special educational needs co-ordinator offers well planned extra support in basic skills work to pupils with the most significant learning difficulties and is readily available to assist with personal difficulties pupils bring to her.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are ineffective at all levels. Since their appointment, the interim headteacher and senior leaders have worked tirelessly in their attempts to address a legacy of underachievement and many endemic weaknesses. However, as a team they lack the training, expertise, experience and focus to improve this school quickly enough.

Senior leaders have not conducted an audit of teaching and learning. The result of this is that weaknesses in provision are not being tackled nor strengths built upon. Too many teachers are not fully aware of their corporate responsibilities in raising achievement and standards. Thus, as senior leaders recognise, there are unacceptable discrepancies in the way in which new and potentially useful initiatives are implemented from class to class.

School improvement planning is weak. The development plan, devised with the assistance of the local authority, lacks measurable targets, and monitoring and evaluation functions are confused. For this reason, governors are not satisfactorily equipped to judge whether tangible improvements have been secured or to hold the school to account.

The school is living beyond its means. It has managed to secure a balanced budget only by use of fast dwindling reserves. There is no plan to address this situation. The use of resources is generally unsatisfactory.

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

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for the help that you gave us when we visited your school recently. We talked to the school council and to lots of you during lessons.

We found some good things about your school. You enjoy your school life. You come to school very regularly and only stay at home when you are really ill. You feel safe and told us that you can talk to the adults if you feel worried. You know how to follow a healthy lifestyle, and some of you said that you now eat a more balanced diet. Year 6 pupils help deal with problems in the playground. Your behaviour is good at school – well done!

There were several important things that worried us about your school. None of these is your fault. Your school could do more to help you learn. The interim headteacher and his team have worked to try to improve the school, but things are still not nearly good enough for you.

We have asked the school to make sure that you make much better progress with your reading, writing and mathematics, and to make sure that all teaching is always as good as the best that we saw. We have said that the school must make sure you all receive appropriate amounts of teaching time for each subject, and that teachers always follow the new ways that they have agreed to use to make lessons better. We have asked the senior teachers to check this carefully.

We have decided that you are not being given the education you need and deserve and the school requires special measures. This means that an inspector from Ofsted will visit your school regularly to make sure the school does much better for you.

Thank you again for your help. We enjoyed meeting you. Good luck in the future.