

Eggbuckland Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113324
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	311211
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Lancaster
Headteacher	Christopher James
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Charfield Drive Eggbuckland Plymouth PL6 5PS
Telephone number	01752 703656
Fax number	01752 769802

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

The degree to which the school meets the individual needs of pupils, including by providing a suitably stimulating range of learning activities.

How effectively leaders and managers bring about improvement, especially in writing and in pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2.

The work of the Hearing Support Centre.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, an assembly and pupils at lunch and play. Teachers' assessment records and pupils' work were scrutinised. Discussions were held with pupils, staff, governors and parents. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This large school mostly serves the needs of pupils in the local area. Children's attainment on entry, especially in communication and language skills, is below the level expected of children of their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. This is because the school has a specialist Hearing Support Centre for pupils with severe hearing impairment and this also accommodates a Nursery class. There is a high rate of pupil movement into and out of the school other than at the normal times, often related to service families. The movement of pupils and their specific learning needs often affect some year groups very significantly.

The school holds the following quality marks: Healthy School, Healthy Kitchen and Inclusion Kitemark awards.

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 continues to improve. It already has several outstanding features, not least the very high quality and very inclusive care, support and guidance given by all the staff that very effectively promote the pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. The very experienced headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He leads a strong team of senior leaders and governors. Together they empower staff and promote excellent links with parents and outside agencies, which greatly enrich pupils' learning. Eggbuckland Vale truly is a place where respectful, supportive adults share an effective commitment to helping pupils become well-rounded individuals. As one parent wrote, echoing the views of most, 'The school has a friendly atmosphere with a real sense of community spirit.' Several other parents also praised the school for 'being there for them'.

In this supportive environment, all pupils, across a wide range of abilities and learning needs, including several with severe hearing impairment, achieve well academically. Pupils who enter the school other than at the normal time of entry also make good progress while attending this school. Consequently, standards are typically above average by the end of Year 6. However, standards are lower than this in the current year because there is a higher than usual number of pupils with learning difficulties, several of whom arrived late from other schools. Nevertheless, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6 most pupils have good reading, writing and numeracy skills. Artwork on display and the pupils' commitment to physical activity indicate that creative and sporting skills are also well developed. Many pupils make excellent progress in reading and derive significant benefit from the individual help they receive if they are struggling. Although encouraged well in some parts of the school, pupils' speaking skills remain a relative weakness. This is because they are not promoted with enough consistency as they move through the school and there are some missed opportunities to develop speaking skills in lessons.

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes), because activities are carefully matched to their individual needs. Pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2 where provision has been improved by new facilities and continued sharpening of teachers' planning. Good progress continues in Years 3 to 6 and as in Years 1 and 2, is being accelerated by a strengthening of the curriculum so that it interests pupils even more. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who attend the Hearing Support Centre, is consistently good. These pupils make good progress, especially towards meeting their individual targets. Pupils who start school at times other than at the normal time of entry also make good progress while attending this school.

In response to excellent care, support and guidance, pupils make considerable gains in their personal development. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils greatly enjoy school because there is a good curriculum, which is enriched by an excellent range of clubs and other extra-curricular activities. Learning activities are becoming increasingly relevant and interesting to the pupils, as seen to very good effect in a lesson in Year 6 where pupils really enjoyed their work based on designing and making biscuits. Pupils say, 'We learn in a fair way and learning is often fun.' The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially their understanding of differing cultures and beliefs, is outstanding. Their empathy in supporting the 'Signing Clubs' so wholeheartedly is a clear example of these excellent personal qualities. Assemblies and the breadth of pupils' writing and artistic opportunities are other strong features, which promote pupils' reflection and an excellent understanding of what it means to be part of a caring society.

The pupils combine exuberance with good team awareness during their well organised lunchtime play activities and clearly show their excellent adoption of healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school and their local community. For example, as members of the school council or as 'Playground Buddies', pupils demonstrate a sincere and confident commitment to helping each other. These personal skills, in combination with their good academic skills, prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning are good across the school, including in the Hearing Support Centre. The management of the pupils' behaviour and the way teachers and their assistants work closely with parents and develop the pupils' reading and increasingly strong writing skills are especially good features. Teachers plan their work effectively and generally assess pupils' progress well. They give good academic guidance, including in their marking of pupils' work, where they offer clear ways of improving to the pupils. Teachers usually provide effective challenge by questioning pupils and stimulating use of interactive whiteboards. They also include suitably challenging extension work during group activities. Teachers deploy their assistants and voluntary helpers to good effect, particularly to help individual pupils who find learning difficult, or to support group work. However, at times, not all pupils are engaged to best effect during whole-class sessions. This is because during discussions at the start and end of lessons the differing needs of all pupils are not always met well enough.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher represents an excellent 'figure-head' to his capable colleagues. Senior leaders give good support and in turn work with all members of staff, as a team, to provide a good quality of education for the pupils. Governors also work very supportively as part of the team and give very wise council whenever it is needed. Because monitoring and self-evaluation is thorough and effective, the school knows itself well. Targets are used effectively to address pupils' needs and to accelerate their progress. Initiatives to improve pupils' writing, to strengthen teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2, and the use of information and communication technology, have been successfully accomplished. Other initiatives, for example, to provide a stimulating curriculum which links subjects together as topics and connects with pupils' interests and previous experience, although not yet implemented to best effect in all parts of the school, are already benefiting pupils' learning. These initiatives, as well as good improvement since the last inspection, demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and enriched by excellent links with parents. Leadership is well focused and effective in ensuring that the needs of all children, including several with severe hearing impairment, are assessed accurately and met with equal success. Care, guidance and support are of the highest quality, and teaching and the curricular learning experiences are consistently good. As a result, children make good progress, particularly in developing positive attitudes and self-confidence as learners. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are broadly average but, given their low starting points, some children still have difficulty in understanding and using words. The Foundation Stage facilities are very well equipped and provide stimulating areas where children can learn practically and enjoyably. However, the Nursery class is located in a separate block, constraining close interaction with Reception classes. The school has plans to address this so that children make an even smoother transition into full-time schooling at the start of the Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- More consistently emphasise and improve pupils' speaking skills in lessons so that they do as well in this aspect of their work as in their reading and writing.
- Ensure that work is always pitched at the right level for all pupils when they are working as a class at the start or end of lessons.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eggbuckland Vale Primary School, Plymouth PL6 5PS

We really enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk with us, especially members of the school council. We agree with you and with most of your parents who feel that yours is a good school. These are the main things we found.

- Eggbuckland Vale is already good, has some outstanding features and continues to improve.
- You are taught well and make good progress. Many of you make excellent progress in reading.
- Your behaviour, the way you live healthily and supportively together and contribute to the community are excellent.
- You enjoy school and benefit from a good range of learning activities in class and an excellent range of clubs and other events.
- Staff work very effectively with your parents and other people and care for you exceedingly well.
- Your headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is strongly supported by other senior managers and governors. They are good as a team at making sure that you learn well and enjoy school.

To help the school to become even better I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do these things: Ensure that you develop your speaking skills as successfully as those in reading and writing. I have also asked them to make sure that you are all challenged well when you are taught together as a whole-class group.

If you continue to show the same enthusiasm for school and continue to give of your best, you will help to make your school even better.

Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future.

Alex Baxter Lead inspector

Annex B

21 May 2008

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Alex Baxter
Lead inspector