

Hawkchurch Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113356
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311226
Inspection date	23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Lewis
Headteacher	Cliff Seabrook
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Hawkchurch Axminster EX13 5XD
Telephone number	01297 678331
Fax number	01297 678331

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following.

The achievement of pupils, with a particular focus on their recent progress.

The way teaching and the curriculum are adapted to meet the needs of pupils in classes with three or four year groups.

The systems the school uses to check its own performance and how well it uses information gained to bring about improvements.

Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, questionnaires received from parents and analyses of the school's working documents. Other aspects of the school were not inspected in detail.

Description of the school

Although the school is exceptionally small, the number of pupils on roll has almost doubled since the last inspection. Pupils are taught in two small classes with three year groups in one and four in the other. Pupils come from a very wide range of socio-economic circumstances in the local rural area and further afield. The large majority are White British and only a tiny minority are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry is very varied and with such small numbers, it fluctuates from one year to the next, but overall it is close to that usually found. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties has increased and is close to the national average, but there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The headteacher and most of the other staff who work with pupils have been appointed in the last two years.

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 that has begun to improve. It has some good features but also some important areas in need of improvement. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. Many arrive exceptionally early and attendance is above the national average. All pupils are known to each other and by all members of staff, and this helps to ensure good levels of pastoral care and support. Pupils learn, play and have lunch together and are very sensitive about the specific needs of some of their peers and how they can help them. Most parents like the school and several travel a considerable distance to enable their children to attend. One wrote, 'The teachers seem to care greatly' and another who recently transferred her children to the school commented, 'Their confidence and interest in school has greatly improved since joining the school.'

Achievement is satisfactory with most pupils of all abilities making expected levels of progress in each class. Children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly and make sound progress in their first year. Those very few older pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress, enabling them to work at levels expected nationally for their age. Progress in some lessons is slower than it should be, as pupils of one year group have to wait while the teacher focuses on a different age or ability group. The time spent each day in lessons is shorter than often found. Standards by the end of Year 6 are average but fluctuate. Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are on track to attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school, but relatively few are likely to exceed age-related expectations. By the end of Year 6, pupils have acquired a reasonable level of skills needed for the next stage of their education and adult life.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and good steps are being taken to improve them. The headteacher has effectively set about raising the profile of the school and improving the facilities and accommodation. On his arrival, he identified accurately some weaknesses in pupils' learning and gaps in records of their progress. Improved systems for assessing pupils and tracking their progress are being developed but the school is not yet using this information fully to set challenging targets based on each pupil's potential or to look for overall trends in achievement. The headteacher has a reasonably accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but is not always pinpointing precisely enough what needs to be improved or following up new approaches swiftly enough to gauge the impact they are having. As a result some grades in the school's self-evaluation form, such as the school's capacity to improve and care, welfare and guidance, were overgenerous.

As the new team of teachers gains experience, the headteacher is beginning to delegate some responsibilities. Improved arrangements for checking the performance of the school have been established very recently and the headteacher is engaged in training to strengthen his monitoring skills. Governors, several of whom are new, are also embarking on training. This is already increasing their understanding of their role, how to hold the school to account and the need for more detailed reports about the school's performance. The headteacher and governors have established a generally effective improvement plan and carefully addressed the substantial underspend from the previous year. Improvements in the school have accelerated in the last 18 months after a period of little change, and the school has sufficient capacity to maintain and build further on these improvements.

The very recent appointment of additional learning support assistants is making a significant contribution to the satisfactory teaching and learning in both classes. The advantageous adult to pupil ratio means that all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties, can receive a lot of individual attention in lessons and this helps their learning and personal development. Teachers carefully plan a range of activities designed to reflect the exceptionally wide age range in their classes, but at times all the pupils begin on the same activity. Those who are older and/or more able are not fully challenged until later in the lesson, when they get on to the extension activities. On other occasions, teachers do not use their own assessments sufficiently to match the work to pupils' different levels of understanding and all are given the same tasks. This slows pupils' learning at times and reduces their motivation. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory rather than good because although there are many strong elements of pastoral care and support, academic guidance is only satisfactory. Most of the pupils' work is marked. Teachers often offer encouraging comments but they do not consistently give enough guidance about how pupils can improve. Individual short-term targets have been introduced. Pupils say these are helpful but a few struggle to recall them and teachers do not refer to them enough when marking work. Long-term targets, although apparently challenging, are somewhat arbitrary and are not used enough to promote discussion about raising standards.

The curriculum is satisfactory. All the required subjects are taught, although this is not reflected in displays of pupils' work or by interesting artefacts in classrooms. Pupils have relatively few opportunities to work independently on extended pieces of work. This tends to slow learning, as each group is sometimes over-dependent on the teacher, needing to be told what to do next. Recent curricular improvements include good opportunities to work with computers and the use of imaginative materials to promote their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils know about the importance of healthy lifestyles and participate enthusiastically in physical activities, including swimming. Although there is no school council there are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities across the school and contribute to the wider community, for example the rota for cleaning the classrooms after lunch and participating in village events. The school implements all the statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils. Pupils feel safe in school. They are happy about approaching an adult if they have a problem and feel confident that adults listen and act on any issues they raise. The school is aware that it is not making full use of the spacious hall and extensive outdoor areas to extend the curriculum. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of good and enriching experiences such as the trip to the British Museum in London, the visit of a 'Roman soldier' and clubs after school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The satisfactory provision for the youngest children is partially limited by the relatively small classroom they share with pupils aged five to eight. Equipment and apparatus are being improved and the very recent appointment of a learning support assistant means that the children have satisfactory opportunities to learn through play and to move independently in and out of doors. Nevertheless, at times the learning experiences are constrained, especially when there is only one adult with the class.

The school responds well to the exceptionally small numbers by operating a flexible and sensitive individual induction programme. Parents appreciate this and it enables the children to settle quickly. The teaching team uses careful observations and frequently assess the children's progress. Children make satisfactory progress and by the end of the year attain standards that are broadly average.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring teachers improve the match of work for pupils of all abilities within and between year groups.
- Make better use of individual assessment information to set challenging long-term targets and strengthen the ways pupils are helped to think about short-term ways they can improve their work.
- Review the overall curriculum to ensure there are more opportunities for independent learning and better use is made of the available time, the accommodation and the school grounds.
- Improve teachers' and governors' skills and procedures for systematically and rigorously checking the school's performance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Dear Children

Inspection of Hawkchurch Church of England Primary School, Hawkchurch EX13 5XD

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed talking to groups of you, seeing some of your work and walking round your school. You were very helpful in answering my questions. Overall, Hawkchurch is a satisfactory school that is improving. Here are some of the highlights I noticed.

- You behave well in class and around the school.
- You all know each other very well and are thoughtful about ways of welcoming new children when they join the school.
- Many of you arrive very early, you like being in school and you nearly all attend every day.
- You concentrate in lessons and work hard, and this means you all make progress.
- You get lots of individual attention, especially now there are more adults working in the classrooms.
- You like doing different activities, for example, in the gardening club and when you go on trips such as the visit to London.
- Everyone who works in the school takes good care of you and makes sure you are safe.
- The headteacher is introducing new ideas to help make the school better and the numbers are growing again after a period when they declined.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on four things.

- Help teachers to make sure the work set for you is not too hard or too easy.
- Make more use of information from assessing your work when deciding what sort of targets you should be working towards in the next few weeks and by the end of each year.
- Think carefully about all the different subjects and activities that are planned and how better use can be made of the school day, the buildings and grounds.
- Make sure that all the teachers and governors are helped to develop good ways of checking how well the school is doing. I feel sure you will all want to help make Hawkchurch Primary an even better place to be.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead inspector

31 January 2008



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EX13 5XD**

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Martin Kerly
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