

Eastover Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123679
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	330260
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	394
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	59
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Hocking
Headteacher	Tim Walters
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wellington Road Bridgwater TA6 5EX
Telephone number	01278 422693

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Inspection number	330260

Fax number

01278 434883

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. Children start in Reception, which is the last part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils receiving free schools is above average. This has risen since the introduction of cooked meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The range of difficulties and disabilities is broad, including autism, speech and communication problems, and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school was deemed to require special measures in July 2007 and has since been subject to regular monitoring visits. The headteacher joined the school in an interim capacity in September 2007 and was appointed to the substantive post in April 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The school is a very different place to the one it was 16 months ago. As parents, adults and pupils will tell you, 'There is much more structure at the school,' and, 'The leaders are clear about what they want to improve, and why, and this information is clear to all.'

This is now a good school and one that is reaping the benefits of the hard work of all staff in their response to the headteacher's unrelenting drive and determination to improve achievement and raise standards. The school has travelled a long way in a short time and number of areas of its work that were of significant concern are now strengths. Pupils achieve well in both their academic and their personal development. This has transformed the school, turning it round from a school where many pupils underachieved to one where they are making good progress and thriving. Children's levels of attainment when they start school in the EYFS are below expectations. In the past, progress over time has been inconsistent and standards have usually been below average by the end of Year 6. The measures put in place to improve achievement have had a good impact. Standards in each year group are generally in line with the levels expected and in the case of reading sometimes higher. This is a real success because the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average in each year group and these pupils are making good progress. National test results of Year 6 pupils improved dramatically in 2008 in reading and mathematics. This, together with inspection evidence, indicates that there has been very good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in the last year by most pupils across all year groups.

A key reason for the improvement in achievement is good teaching and learning. Teachers make good use of the rigorous systems that are now in place for checking pupils' progress. Few pupils fall behind in their work, but any that do are identified quickly and given the extra help they need. Class teachers are fully involved in this analysis and this has helped them to raise their expectations of pupils' potential. Pupils have a love of learning, work hard and behave well in lessons and around the school. They know the targets set for them to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills although they are not regularly reminded of these when teachers mark their work. Marking also varies in quality and so pupils, particularly the more able, are not always getting sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory. Whilst the curriculum was adjusted quickly to arrest the decline in standards and improve opportunities for pupils to achieve their best in basic skills, the development is more limited in other subjects including information and communication technology (ICT). Subject leaders have not yet had time to evaluate the effectiveness of pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics, although they are moving rapidly to a point where they can inform leaders of where changes are required to improve the provision further. The school's high quality of pastoral care has many strengths and reflects the school's impressive commitment to meeting the social and emotional needs of all pupils and their families.

Leadership and management are good. The transformation of the school is down to the hard work and determination of the senior leaders with strong support from the local authority and governors to address the previous failings. Work has been systematic, and there have been no quick fixes. There is a strong culture of reviewing and evaluating performance and clear reasons

for action, which has steadily involved the senior leaders. The governing body provides a satisfactory level of support and is closely involved in the school's forward planning. Most governors are relatively new and are rightly seeking to strengthen their ability to challenge the work of the school. The school's greatly improved performance since the last inspection and its clear strategic vision demonstrate its good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class from below expected starting points. By the time they start in Year 1 most are meeting expectations in all areas of their learning and in some areas, such as emotional and physical development, are above those expected. The good emphasis given to children's personal, social and emotional development forms a basis for their evident success in learning and their good development. Letters and sounds have a high priority. Children love this work and progress is rapid. A good range of activities challenges their thinking and encourages them to develop their communication skills. For example, the opportunity to share their own box of personal favourites or to report on what visits and events they have shared with the class bear are undertaken with great pride. There is a very good balance of teacher led activity and those that children choose for themselves. Increasingly adults are planning activities around children's interests, encouraging them to greater challenge. There is good emphasis given to developing social skills through role play, although the adults recognise that more could be done to match more closely resources to meet the individual needs of children during outdoor activities. All the adults are rigorous in tracking the gains the children make in their learning and care is taken to give them the right support when they need it. Links with pre-school providers and parents are strengthening so that children's welfare is promoted well. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about the things they do. The good leadership of the EYFS is seen in the wide and interesting range of activities planned for children and the progress that has been made in the last 14 months. The staff liaise closely with the local authority and value the good support and guidance they receive in their efforts to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum provides better opportunities for all pupils to develop their knowledge and skills across a wider range of subjects, including ICT.
- Develop the role of curriculum and subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating standards and achievement in science and ICT and in the foundation subjects.
- Ensure that the more able pupils are given better guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Strengthen the capacity of the governing body to challenge the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' good achievement is seen in the rapidly improving rates of progress that are now occurring consistently in all year groups. Progress in reading is particularly impressive. The recent whole-school focus on writing is having good impact on progress, with improved standards of work in writing across all classes. Whilst progress in mathematics has lagged behind other areas, this is quickly catching up due to improved provision in aspects of the subject, such as methods of calculation and mental mathematics, which were previously weaknesses in pupils'

learning. With carefully focused support and a range of well matched intervention strategies, pupils who are behind or have learning difficulties are getting the academic support and guidance they need to improve rapidly.

The improved picture of pupils' progress is having a significant effect on the standards attained. Throughout the school far more pupils are reaching the standards expected of their age than in the past. This is most evident in reading and mathematics. All year groups made better than expected progress last year. The percentage of pupils exceeding expected standards remains below average in English but is broadly in line in mathematics and science. In part this is due to weaker boys' performance in writing. The school is beginning to turn this around by providing more engaging purposes for writing to attract boys. However, there are fewer opportunities embedded in the curriculum for foundation subjects for pupils to be challenged and to strive for high standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on well together. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive, and pupils feel valued and know that adults have their best interests at heart. Pupils are keen to learn, enjoy school and behave well. In these circumstances, it is surprising that the attendance rate is only average. This is because too many parents choose to take their children on holiday during term time, despite the school's efforts to tackle this.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good. Pupils work together amicably, respect the feelings of others, and have a well developed sense of fair play. While pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, their awareness of the richness and diversity of British culture is a relative weakness. Pupils respond positively when given responsibility, for example as members of the active school council or as friends to those who need extra support at lunchtime. Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory overall, although there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in lessons. Opportunities to take responsibility for their learning, including using their initiative and making decisions, are underdeveloped in many lessons. Pupils are safety conscious and are concerned for the welfare of others. They enjoy a good range of physical activities and understand the importance of healthy eating. Pupils have a strong social awareness, make a valuable contribution to the local community, and are keen fundraisers for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly and provide learning activities in English, mathematics and science that are well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Pupils are often given opportunities to talk about their learning with a partner or in small groups. This helps pupils to think about how successfully they are meeting the lesson's objectives, to learn from one another, and to appreciate one another's work. Teachers' ability to ask questions designed to promote thinking, to probe for meaning, and to encourage pupils to assess how much they know is improving. Pupils have targets in the form of skills to develop in reading, writing and mathematics, but these are not referred to often enough in lessons or when work is marked.

This means that pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to think about how work is helping them to achieve their individual targets.

Resources have improved and pupils enjoy the wider range of books they can now use. Teachers are also encouraging pupils to practise their skills regularly at home and this too has helped the marked improvement in their progress. The special educational needs coordinator and teaching assistants are extremely skilled at supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as those with English as an additional language, so that these pupils make good gains in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has been successfully revised so that it meets the literacy and numeracy needs of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are well catered for. Planning of other subjects shows that there is insufficient challenge in some of their work. This limits the progress that pupils make in these subjects. The school has worked on a new plan for the curriculum designed to encourage the use of basic skills in a range of contexts while also teaching subject specific skills and knowledge. This started at the beginning of term and the first results have not yet been evaluated. There are some problems with activities being repeated in consecutive years and the ICT curriculum does not yet build on pupils' existing skills. The school provides a good range of clubs, visits and visitors to bring the curriculum alive for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff are highly committed to raising pupils' self-esteem and promoting their health and safety. The levels of personal support given to all pupils and their families are excellent. The school has many high quality intervention strategies in place including nurture and social groups. Personnel, such as the parent support adviser, play key roles in the provision. Statutory arrangements for the safeguarding of children and child protection are fully in place. There are rigorous systems for checking on academic progress in English and mathematics that involve staff, and increasingly parents, that have significantly improved the guidance and support given to pupils. Tracking systems do not yet extend beyond this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is at the heart of the school's success. He has brought rigour to the school's evaluation procedures, and has been the driving force for improvement. He has high expectations for pupils' academic and personal development, and conveys his ideas persuasively so that staff have a common determination to make the school even more effective. His skills in supporting and motivating staff, together with his tenacity and excellent management skills, have helped to accelerate pupils' learning. Staff are very aware that the school's performance is on an upward trend and, unsurprisingly, morale is high. Because self-evaluation procedures are effective, the school has an accurate view of its performance. Challenging targets have been set for pupils' progress. This has ensured that teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' standards.

Until recently, too much responsibility for setting and achieving the school's aims rested on the shoulders of the headteacher. However, the situation is changing rapidly. Governors are beginning to work more closely with staff to improve their knowledge of the school's performance. The leadership team has benefited from well-judged training and responsibilities delegated wisely. Consequently, senior leaders are making an increasingly valuable contribution to strategic planning and school improvement. The school has sensibly given a high priority to raising standards in English and mathematics, and their effective leadership and management are evident in pupils' improved progress. However, the roles of the coordinators for other subjects are generally underdeveloped. This restricts the school's capacity to improve provision more widely. This is recognised by the school, and sensible plans are in place to rectify the situation.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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	3
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eastover Community Primary School, Bridgwater TA6 5EX

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school. As many of you know this was my third visit and I am pleased to say your school has improved such a lot that it no longer needs special measures.

There are many good things to say about your school, which I have listed below.

- You are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Your behaviour is good and you told us that it is continually getting better. We noticed the way you opened doors and were so polite when talking to us. This makes your school a friendly, pleasant place where you all care for one another.
- Teaching is good and teachers check your progress thoroughly to ensure you do not fall behind.
- Those of you in the Reception classes get off to a really good start in school.
- All the adults do a good job in looking after you and making sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- Your headteacher works hard to make sure the school runs well and that everyone feels a part of the school community.

You are fortunate to have an excellent headteacher and caring staff. They want to make the school an even better place so I have asked them to do these things.

- Provide more challenging ways in which you can improve your skills, including information and communication technology (ICT).
- Check up more regularly on how well the work is planned and taught in all subjects, not just English and mathematics.
- Give you ideas about how you could improve your work.
- Help the adults who are responsible for the school, known as governors, to make sure the school keeps doing well.

Remember that you too have played your part in Eastover's rapid improvement. So, keep working hard and always try your best.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector