

Okehampton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113260
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	366599
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Massey HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	528
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Stevens
Headteacher	Mrs Hazel Fox
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
School address	Glendale Road Okehampton Devon EX20 1JB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. They observed parts of 19 lessons taught by 18 teachers, and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's documentation including the school's improvement plan, minutes of meetings, policies, and the school's own analysis of its surveys of parents' and pupils' views.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The rate of progress that pupils are making in their learning across the school.
- The extent to which the provision provided by the school is meeting the needs of all pupils.
- The extent to which school leaders have the capacity to improve the school further.

Information about the school

Okehampton Primary School is larger than average and the only primary school serving the town of Okehampton and the immediate surrounding rural area of Dartmoor. Most pupils are of White British heritage and almost all have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just below average. About one in eight of the pupils in the current Year 6 is new to the school this academic year and about a quarter of this year group have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Recent reassessment of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities across the whole school has reduced the proportion to below the national average. Just under half of these children have speech, language and communication difficulties and about a quarter have moderate learning difficulties. The Nursery, which is managed by the governing body, was inspected at the same time as the school. It has 55 full-time equivalent places, with many children attending part time.

The school has a number of nationally accredited awards, including the Healthy Schools Plus, Fairtrade status and the Eco Schools Green Flag. It is also an Enterprise Champion School.

When Okehampton Primary School was inspected in June 2009, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on four occasions. At the last monitoring inspection the school was judged to be making good progress.

A new headteacher joined the school after the last inspection in June 2009 and two new assistant headteachers were appointed during this academic year. A new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage and a new coordinator for special educational needs have also recently joined the school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

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. It is now providing a good education because there has been very rapid improvement in nearly all aspects of the school's work.

The atmosphere in school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are happy, enjoy school and talk enthusiastically about exciting learning experiences they have had both in and out of the classroom. They behave well, demonstrate tolerance of others and say that everyone is included. Older ones frequently demonstrate concern for the security and safety of younger pupils and contribute to their well-being by organising a range of activities at lunch and playtime. All pupils are aware of their responsibilities within the school community and show maturity in the way they approach both work and play. Pupils of all ages, including those in Years 1 and 2, make a positive contribution to the school council, for example by helping to develop the anti-bullying policy and making risk assessments for new equipment. The care, guidance and support provided are good and pupils say that there is always someone to talk to if they have difficulties and that problems are sorted out quickly. Year 6 pupils say that they feel well prepared for the transfer from Year 6 to secondary school.

Accurate, regular assessment provides information which allows the school to track pupils' progress over time and is available to parents and carers through the school's website.

The assessment information shows that in all year groups the rate of progress is accelerating and, as a result, attainment is rising. Although the gap between the performance of boys and girls, particularly in English, remains, it is reducing and is now close to that found nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress in line with their peers. Those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals have made particularly good progress in writing over the last year.

The school's analysis identified that although 2010 results in English at the end of Year 6 were in line with the national average, good performance in reading masked underachievement in writing. Over the last year, a whole-school focus on developing writing skills has had a very positive impact on pupils' achievement. A new creative, themed curriculum which gives exciting opportunities for writing generates interest and motivation. As a result of very effective training and coaching for teachers, the large majority of teaching is now good and some is outstanding. Not only is the quality of written work improving rapidly, but also pupils talk about how much they are enjoying what they are doing and the sense of achievement they are gaining. Even the youngest pupils now have a vocabulary to talk about their learning because teachers, regularly discuss how well they are doing with them. Most pupils know what they need to do in order to improve, especially in English, although they are less confident in mathematics.

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Although there is some excellent practice within the school, there is still some variation in the quality of teaching. Teachers routinely, use assessment information to provide activities that match the needs of pupils with different abilities, including the most able. However, not all use the information they collect through marking and observing progress in lessons to modify their day-to-day planning, which would allow them to personalise activities and sort out the mistakes and misconceptions of individual pupils. Pupils are not always given the opportunity to act on the advice they have been given through marking and the quality of that advice is variable. In some lessons, the teachers' learning objectives are not sufficiently precise and pupils do not have clear success criteria so that they know exactly what is expected of them.

The exceptional and outstanding leadership of the headteacher has ensured a rapid improvement in the achievement and well-being of pupils across the school since it was put into special measures. She has laid secure foundations for further development and although the pace and depth of change have been very fast, she has created a culture where staff morale is very high because all staff feel accountable and supported so that they are fully committed and very ambitious to improve. The recent arrival of two outstanding new assistant headteachers, one for each key stage, has added a significant amount of additional drive and energy to the senior team and their very positive impact on pupils' achievement is already evident. They share the headteacher's vision and unwavering commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. Systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of provision are exceptionally thorough and involve middle as well as senior leaders. Underachievement of pupils and underperformance of teachers are both identified very quickly and effective action taken to rectify problems. The accuracy and rigour of the school's self-evaluation and the evidence of rapidly rising achievement, improved attendance and behaviour, all demonstrate good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that achievement in writing and mathematics continues to rise.
- Share the good and outstanding practice in the school to ensure consistency between teachers and good achievement for individual pupils by:
 - giving pupils of all abilities clear success criteria so they know precisely what they need to be able to do, know or understand by the end of the lesson and then ensuring that marking focuses on these issues
 - ensuring that pupils, consistently, have the opportunity to act on the advice they have been given
 - using assessment through observation and marking to identify individual pupils' mistakes and misconceptions which are then used to inform personalised day-to-day planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In Years 1 and 2, pupils' attainment is currently above average, but, in older year groups, the legacy of underachievement from previous years means that, overall, attainment is average, but better in reading than in writing and mathematics. The current Year 6 had exceptionally low attainment at the end of Year 2. As a result of good teaching, these

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pupils have made up lost ground and are on track currently to achieve results in national tests this summer that are close to the national average. The school's assessment information and evidence from lesson observations show that right across the school, the rate of progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and particularly in writing, has accelerated and as a result, achievement is good. This is the case for all groups of pupils, including those with language and communication or moderate learning difficulties. In lessons, even the very youngest pupils engage actively with their learning and are able to concentrate on a single activity for a sustained length of time.

Pupils are very aware of the positive impact of good attendance on their achievement and rates of absence have fallen over the last year, with the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent reducing significantly. Regular opportunities to develop enterprise skills, often in collaboration with local businesses, mean that pupils are developing a good understanding of financial issues and the world of work. Although plans are in place to improve the facilities for information and communication technology (ICT), Year 6 pupils feel nevertheless that they have the skills they will need once they reach secondary school. Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy and many join in sporting activities outside lesson time. So many older pupils enjoy organising sporting activities at lunchtime for younger ones that there is a rota so that all may be involved.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is now securely good. Both teaching and support staff have gained the confidence and enthusiasm to improve the quality of pupils' learning. The senior team, quickly identifies from monitoring activities and assessment information where pupils are making less progress and provides immediate intervention to develop teachers' skills. Teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in English, is strong because a great deal of training has been provided and this is reflected in the progress pupils are making. Most pupils know how well they are doing and are set clear targets, but the way these are used varies from class to class, as does the effectiveness of marking and the way it is used to inform teachers' planning. Teachers use questioning effectively to develop understanding and they make sure that all pupils are included. Some opportunities are missed to enhance learning through the use of new technology. In most lessons, pupils are given plenty of opportunity to work independently and the atmosphere in classrooms is calm and cooperative because teachers have high expectations of behaviour. In the most effective lessons, teachers model what they want pupils to achieve and give them very clear success criteria.

The new curriculum has generated enthusiasm and interest for both teachers and pupils. One pupil said 'Themes are more interesting and cool and we want to join in and listen more.' Planning has taken place in teams so that all teachers are involved and pupils have also contributed their ideas. Each theme is started off by a memorable activity, such as a school trip or visitor. For example, a penguin, suddenly, arrived from Antarctica, a dinosaur footprint appeared in the playground, and there was a visit from the engineers who designed the Olympic stadium. To support the curriculum, strong links with businesses and other schools have developed and many members of the local community are also involved. The impact of the curriculum is evaluated regularly through scrutiny of pupils' progress and conversations with pupils and staff. However, opportunities for teachers to review each topic as it is completed are not yet available, which would ensure that the best practice is recorded for next year. The school provides extensive extra-curricular activities, which are taken up enthusiastically by pupils, ranging from reading and sport to music and a group of 'eco-warriors'. The school was the recent winner of a national 'Grow it, Dig it, Cook it and Eat it' competition.

In the short time since the new coordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities was appointed, provision for these pupil groups has improved and outcomes have risen rapidly. Support for these pupils and those who may be vulnerable is carefully targeted and monitored, with very effective use made of one-to-one support for some. Partnerships with outside agencies are constructive and helpful. All groups have made good progress from their starting points in achievement, self-confidence and behaviour. Teaching assistants are given training so that they have the skills to meet specific needs of pupils. They work very cooperatively with teachers and maintain an appropriate balance between providing support and encouraging pupils' independence. Systems for managing safeguarding and behaviour are all understood well and operate effectively.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have high expectations and have instilled exceptional commitment and ambition to improve in both staff and pupils. There is a very strong emphasis on teamwork, joint planning, reflection and identification of where there is excellent practice so that it can be shared. Regular and accurate tracking of pupils' progress means that all staff understand where there are weaknesses and where improvements are needed. Teachers pay close attention to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils, who say that everyone is treated equally. One pupil in the early stages of learning English as an additional language was anxious to tell inspectors about how well she had been cared for and welcomed by other pupils. All groups of pupils, no matter what their heritage or background, are making good progress and any gaps in performance are closing.

The school is taking an imaginative approach to promoting community cohesion and is implementing the comprehensive plan that has been put in place. Local community involvement is strong; for example, the community was consulted about what experiences pupils should have had by the time they leave primary school. The school has links with schools overseas, both in Europe and beyond, and the impact of a recent exchange visit with a school from Germany was felt right across the school. Pupils' understanding of their role in a multicultural Britain is more limited, but they have just started a link with a more diverse school in London.

The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses well. It has provided both support and challenge to the headteacher as she has led the school out of special measures. Governors are well trained and the appointment of new members has added to the wide range of experience and expertise. Statutory requirements are met and the governing body takes seriously its role in monitoring the implementation of policies. The school's partnership with parents and carers is increasing with a weekly open morning and frequent consultations. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective. Staff are well trained and fully aware of their responsibilities. The governing body is ensuring that the whole breadth of this area is tackled rigorously.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Pupils make a good start to their learning in both Nursery and Reception classes. Well-planned purposeful activities, both indoors and outdoors, engage children's interests and are changed regularly to reflect children's feedback. Provision is being improved constantly to enrich children's experiences, for example in the learning garden and conservatory. There is an agreed balance between sessions as a whole group and times when children decide on their own activities, but children are not given the opportunity to record their free-choice activities themselves. Relationships and behaviour are very good and children are confident to discuss their concerns with adults.

Assessment and planning are undertaken carefully to build on what individual children can do and appropriate next steps are clearly identified. Staff are alert to every opportunity to develop children's own interests and ideas. Parents and carers are encouraged to take an active part in this process and contribute to very informative learning journals. They describe effective preparation for the transition into the Reception class from the Nursery and from the Reception class to Year 1, with pupils being well prepared for the more formal atmosphere of the main school.

Focused leadership and management, together with effective self-evaluation, have driven rapid improvements across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Assessment procedures are rigorous and streamlined and demonstrate children's good progress clearly. Provision is developed constantly; for example, the outdoor area is now a much more stimulating environment. Children's safety and well-being are assured extremely well. There is absolute clarity about roles and responsibilities for both teachers and teaching assistants, which ensures consistency across the whole Early Years Foundation Stage team.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. A recent parental survey undertaken by the school and interviews with some parents and carers during the inspection indicated that the vast majority of parents and carers have confidence in the school and are happy with the education it is providing for their children. In particular they emphasised:

- their belief that their children are happy and safe in school
- the good quality of teaching
- the fact that the school takes account of their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Okehampton Primary School EX20 1JB

Thank you for your welcome and the help that you gave us during the recent inspection of your school. I have now visited you five times since your last inspection and I think your school is now giving you a good standard of education. You will be pleased to know that your school no longer requires extra help to improve. The teachers, the governing body and your parents and carers will be very pleased about this.

Here are some things that I thought were particularly good about your school.

- Your headteacher makes sure that everybody works well together and everyone is included.
- You behave well and look after one another.
- You are making good progress, especially with your writing.
- You are enjoying the new themed curriculum and you told the inspectors that because work is interesting it helps you learn better.
- Nearly all of you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.
- The school is good at looking after you.

I have asked the staff to look at three areas to improve further. They need to make sure that:

- every one of you achieves as well as you can, especially in writing and numeracy
- you know exactly what you need to do in each lesson to make your work as good as possible
- you are given the chance to correct your work after it has been marked
- teachers take note in lessons of when you do not understand so that in future lessons they can make sure you get the help you need.

I hope very much that you will all work hard to help your school continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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