

Awliscombe CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113422
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311261
Inspection dates	10 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Tom Simpson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Andrews
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Kendrick
Date of previous school inspection	27–29 September 2004
School address	Awliscombe Honiton Devon EX14 3PJ
Telephone number	01404 42031
Fax number	01404 46295

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	10 June 2008
Inspection number	311261

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

- standards and achievement in the Foundation Stage
- achievement in writing throughout the school, particularly for higher ability pupils
- the quality of assessment procedures and their impact on academic guidance and on pupils' achievement
- the role of school management at all levels in raising standards and promoting school improvement.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, analysis of the school's tracking and assessment data, and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. The views of parents were gathered from the return of Ofsted's questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a very small school serving a rural area. A significant proportion of the pupils come from the nearby market town of Honiton. Nearly all the pupils are from a White British background. Recent awards received by the school include the Activemark and the Travelwise bronze 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 popular school provides a good education for its pupils. It has some outstanding features. There is a strong ethos of caring for pupils' individual needs while still constantly striving to drive up academic standards further. Nearly all the parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the provision the school makes for their children. Typical of the significant number of observations written on the Ofsted questionnaires was the comment, 'We feel that this is an exceptional school and are very happy with the progress our children are making.' Another wrote, 'The school has a big heart and yet is small enough to care.'

A major reason for the school's success is the high quality leadership and management provided by the headteacher. In the relatively short time she has been in post she has systematically analysed the school's strengths and weaknesses, carried out careful monitoring of the school's provision, identified developmental areas and put in place relevant but realistic strategies for improvement. One example of these is the implementation of new, rigorous procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. These are used effectively to identify any areas of individual or group underperformance and provide extra support where needed. They are already having a positive impact on academic standards. For example, skilled teaching assistants give regular good quality support to pupils with delayed literacy skills, while more-able pupils who have not been reaching their full potential are provided with extra challenges. The headteacher is well supported by the other staff, who are all prepared to adopt new ideas and strategies with enthusiasm and commitment. Being a very small school, each teacher has a significant number of subject management responsibilities. Some are relatively new to their current roles and, as a result, their potential impact on provision has yet to be fully realised. The very able governing body plays a significant part in monitoring the school's provision. For example, individual governors visit the school regularly to view specific and agreed aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of writing or pupils' behaviour, and report their findings back to the full governing body. There is a strong and proactive committee structure and governors are effective 'critical friends' who are prepared to challenge the school's management when they feel this to be appropriate.

Achievement, including that of pupils with learning difficulties, is good throughout the school. Because of the small numbers, attainment on entry to Reception inevitably varies from year. Last year, for instance, it was around the expected level, while this year it is above. Children get off to a good start and make good progress in the Reception class. By the time they reach Year 1 they are well prepared for the rest of their schooling. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the rest of their time in the school and, by the time they leave, standards are above average. The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 have been significantly above average overall for the past few years and are likely to be even higher this year. Standards in mathematics and reading are specific strengths. On the other hand, standards in writing, particularly for more able pupils, are a relative weakness. As a result of the school's efforts, they are beginning to improve and in some year groups pupils are now making significant progress.

Pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved and have positive attitudes towards their work. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. The latest attendance figures are significantly above average. Pupils like being able to contribute to the school and the wider community, appreciating, for instance, the opportunity they have to act as peer mentors. Pupils did tell the inspector, however, that this role was becoming less relevant as behaviour at the school was constantly improving and pupils as a whole were now more capable 'of sorting out their own problems'. Pupils feel that the school management listens to their views. Members of the school council, for example, are proud of the contribution they made to improving playtime arrangements. Pupils enjoy being able to contribute to charities such as the local air ambulance and Children in Need. They are gaining a good understanding of other cultures through various areas of the curriculum, and appreciate the need to lead healthy lifestyles. They have a strong sense of spirituality and are developing a good capacity to empathise with others. As a result of these features and a good overall grounding in basic skills, they are well prepared for their future lives.

A good curriculum is provided and there is an excellent range of enrichment activities. Pupils say that they find their work interesting and told the inspector how much they appreciate the effort the school puts into providing out-of-lesson activities. The school has recently been reorganising the curriculum in order to increase links between different subjects and make work even more relevant and interesting for the pupils. This is already beginning to have a positive effect, but has not been in place long enough for its impact to be fully felt on aspects such as writing. Good links with other schools include the local secondary school working with more-able pupils in mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are good overall and there are some outstanding aspects. Pupils learn at a good rate in most lessons because teachers employ stimulating methods and provide work that is both challenging and well matched to the needs of pupils with different levels of ability. Pupils are well managed in a positive way and as a result relationships are very good at all levels. However, in a small minority of lessons there is not enough use of learning intentions to support pupils' understanding of how well they are getting on. For example, staff do not always begin lessons by telling pupils what the aims of the lesson are, so that at the end of the lesson the pupils themselves can assess the progress they have made towards these aims. Despite this, pupils still learn well because of the lively teaching.

Pupils are very well known to staff as individuals and the pastoral care provided is excellent. Academic guidance and support is good. Year 6 pupils, for example, discussed their academic levels and targets confidently with the inspector and fully understood what they needed to do next to improve their standards. Very occasionally, however, teachers' marking does not help them enough in this. Vulnerable pupils, such as those with learning difficulties, receive very effective support, including that gained from external agencies such as the school health service. Robust procedures are in place to safeguard pupils and ensure safe staff recruitment.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The well-managed provision gives children a good start to their education. There are very effective induction procedures and children settle very quickly into school, working confidently and well with one another. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of children of this age and provide them with a good and relevant curriculum. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, which has a very positive impact on the children's personal development. The children are well taught and they are cared for very well. They make good progress overall and generally reach above-average standards by the time they leave the Reception class. There are particular strengths in aspects of their mathematical and personal, social and emotional development, but a relative weakness in their writing. There is no designated outside play area for children in the Foundation Stage at present. Staff compensate well for this by providing a specific 'physical literacy' programme. Plans for a new early years block, which will include an outdoor area, are well under way. This is expected to be completed by the beginning of next term.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing throughout the school, particularly for more-able pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------	--

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of boarding provision		
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?	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	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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	2	

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?	2	
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	

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.

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	1	
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	2	
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	



11 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Awliscombe CE Primary School, Honiton EX14 3PJ

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. I want particularly to thank those of you who gave up part of your lunch break to speak to me. I found that your school provides you with a good education.

Here are some of the things I found:

- You are very well cared for by the adults at the school.
- Your personal development is good; for example, you are well behaved and thoroughly enjoy coming to school.
- You make good progress in your work, although your writing could still improve more.
- The staff who run the school do a good job in making sure you have a good education and are working hard to make the school even better.
- You are well taught and staff provide lots of interesting activities for you.

Here is what I have asked the school to do now:

- Ensure that pupils throughout the school, especially those who are quicker to learn, do as well as they can in writing – this is important because it is very useful to be good at writing throughout life.

Thank you again for your help. By continuing to work hard you can help keep Awliscombe a good school, or even help improve it further.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Simpson
Lead Inspector