



Woolacombe School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113175
LEA Devon
Inspection number 279111
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector Geoff Burgess AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Beach Road
School category	Community		Woolacombe
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		North Devon EX34 7BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01271 870551
Number on roll	159	Fax number	01271 870556
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms A Davis-Cross
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Sandy Brown

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Though this small primary school mainly serves the villages of Woolacombe and Morteheo, over 40% of pupils come from outside the catchment area, mostly from the town of Ilfracombe. In common with other schools serving seaside areas, pupil mobility is higher than usual. Almost all pupils in the five classes are White British but, for a small number, English is not their first language. Few pupils have free school meals. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties but more than usual have statements of special educational need. When children start school in the Reception class, their attainment is broadly average. However, many of the pupils joining the school later have learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school provides an excellent education for its pupils and excellent value for money, a judgement which matches the school's own analysis. Key to its success has been sustained excellent leadership and management, notably by the headteacher.

Parents are delighted with the exceptional range of activities provided for their children, describing as 'fantastic' the opportunities to 'broaden their horizons and give them confidence.' They are equally happy with the first-rate care their children receive. One described it as, 'A wonderful school ... so caring it feels like an extended family.' Inspectors agree. A particular feature is its very inclusive ethos, with the school happy to welcome newcomers, many of whom need extra help. New parents say how their children 'thrive' and how pleased they are with the support and encouragement they receive.

A consequence of all this care and purposeful activity is that children are very happy at school and a real pleasure to work with. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils invariably are, as noted by a parent, 'tolerant and caring for all.'

Within this happy and inclusive atmosphere, pupils achieve high standards in many subjects and, thanks to high quality teaching, make outstanding overall progress during their time in Woolacombe School. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are very good. The school has shown that it can maintain its high standards and continue to improve. A parent writes, 'The school has kept these high standards over many years but never rests on its laurels and is always looking to the future.' With this in mind, the school recognises that, though standards in maths are good, they do not match the very high standards achieved in English.

What the school should do to improve further

Help pupils to achieve the same high standards in mathematics as they regularly achieve in English by ensuring that all pupils who gain above the expected level by the end of Year 2 achieve above the expected level by the end of Year 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Overall achievement is outstanding. High quality teaching means pupils who join the school in the Reception class make excellent progress as they move through the school, and many achieve high standards across the full range of the curriculum. This was demonstrated well by Year 6 tests in 2005, the results of which were very high, especially in English. Almost half the pupils taking the Year 6 tests joined the school in Years 3 to 6 and these pupils clearly made significant gains after joining the school. However, though progress in mathematics was good, it was not as good as that in English, especially for high attaining pupils.

School records and inspection evidence show that pupils are currently making very good progress throughout the school. An important factor in the success of Woolacombe School is that this extends to subjects such as art, music and physical education where standards are very high. Challenging individual targets are regularly achieved. Speaking and listening skills are excellent. A particular strength is the way pupils with a variety of learning needs, including some with very significant learning difficulties, succeed at their own level. Children in the Reception class make very good progress and almost all have already reached the standards expected for their age. An encouraging sign for the future is that pupils in Year 2 are, again, set to achieve significantly above-average standards in statutory assessments. This shows very good progress in Years 1 and 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils are a delight and they flourish at the school. Their personal development and well being are outstanding. They are thoughtful, confident and engaging. They enthusiastically participate in the wide range of activities offered. Almost all attend at least one of the many school clubs. They are very proud of their school and attendance is good. In the words of one pupil, 'We are really lucky to come here.' Pupils behave extremely well and show remarkable self-control, even when very excited about what they are doing.

Pupils show very good capacity to take responsibility around the school and understand that they need to work hard and behave well. The school council provides a good forum for pupils to voice their opinions and contribute to improvements in school. Pupils' involvement in the setting of targets means they take increasing control over their own learning. 'Deciding on your own targets makes you work harder' commented a pupil. Coupled with very high standards in basic skills, these factors ensure that the pupils are very well prepared for later life.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. They show great respect for the lives and cultures of others. They are mature in their understanding of how contact with others with different lifestyles enriches their own lives. Pupils know how to stay healthy and safe and talk articulately about how they can do this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Evidence of high quality teaching is everywhere: in the social awareness, independence and eloquence of very young children 'planning, doing and reviewing' their work; in the maturity and musical competence of a whole class of 10 and 11-year-olds performing splendidly for a TV film crew; in the way vulnerable pupils are absorbed in their class and in their work, thanks to very skilled management and support; and in the sheer quality of artwork on display around the

school. The main evidence, however, comes from the way, year on year, pupils thrive and make progress as they move through the school.

Pupils make an exceptional contribution to their own learning through their very good work ethic and willingness to try. Expectations of behaviour and of the standards all pupils are capable of attaining are very high. Activities are creatively and carefully planned to engage and motivate pupils of all abilities in the mixed-age classes.

Teachers routinely use very effective procedures to check on pupils' progress and modify and focus their teaching. Pupils know what they need to learn, sometimes set their own targets and are very proud when they achieve them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum provision is outstanding. A rich, stimulating mix of activities during and after school, enthuses and inspires pupils. First-hand experience is valued by the whole school community and pupils have numerous opportunities to go on visits, work with specialists and engage in practical and creative activities. The school's curriculum has been recognised nationally, being used as an exemplar in 'The Curriculum in Successful Primary Schools' (Ofsted). Although due emphasis is given to ensure high standards in basic skills, there is also excellent provision in a wide range of subjects, such as music, physical education and art and design. As one parent said: 'I know the well-rounded education and all the extra-curricular activities set my children up for the rest of their lives'.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with more complex needs, is excellent, promoting rapid progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care guidance and support for its pupils is outstanding. Pupils' needs are at the heart of everything the school does. All pupils are accepted, valued and nurtured. They all know they will receive the help they require, personally and academically. Adults' knowledge of pupils ensures this support is successfully provided for all. The school is particularly successful in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who find behaving appropriately difficult. Many of these pupils join the school at various points during the year because of its well-deserved reputation for supporting pupils with learning difficulties.

Individual attainment is tracked systematically. Targets for future attainment are regularly set and reviewed with pupils, who then know what they can do to improve their work. Provision for child protection and health and safety is exemplary. Strong links with the feeder pre-school help pupils settle into school and those with the secondary schools ensure that pupils move forward with confidence. In the words of a parent, 'My daughter is learning in a safe environment with staff who care for her future.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, staff and governors deserve great praise for creating a school which in so many ways exemplifies all that is best in primary education. Working with large classes in cramped accommodation, an increasing number of pupils who are vulnerable and many who join the school other than at the usual time of admission, this represents excellent leadership and management. The contribution of the headteacher over many years has been outstanding. Her energy levels and ambitions for the school are unflagging. She ensures that everyone has the opportunity, self-confidence and support to make a positive contribution, and is very good at getting the best out of her colleagues.

The governance of the school is very good. Relatively new arrangements for all staff to be involved in leading and managing aspects of the work of the school are already having a positive impact. Very good monitoring procedures ensure that staff and governors know what works and what could be even better.

The focus of the school community, fostered by the head, is on providing the best for, and getting the best out of, all children. Inclusion, activity and involvement are at the heart of everything. Every possible human and physical resource is exploited to make this achievable. Every nook and cranny in the school has been turned into a teaching area. A very good sign of the school's attention to achieving value for money is the very high quality of the resources available for teachers and pupils to use.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed our time in Woolacombe and would like to thank you for all your help and friendly conversations. You will probably know by now that, like you, we think yours is a very special school, with some of the best classroom views in England!

This is what we liked most about your school:

the way you all get on so well together and enjoy your time in school you take a real pride in your school and the school is very proud of you you and your teachers work really hard so you can make progress the fantastic range of exciting and interesting activities provided for you by your teachers and helpers throughout the year the adults help and look after you very well and you always have someone to turn to we think your headteacher deserves a medal for the 21 years she has spent making the school as good as it is.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

see what more your teachers can do to help you make as much progress in mathematics as you do in reading and writing.

Once again, thank you. We know that you will carry on helping all the grown-ups to make sure Woolacombe School continues to be a happy, thriving place.