

Forches Cross Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113127
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357269
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paula Stein
Headteacher	Paul Wisken
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observed all eight teachers and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Talks were held informally with parents and carers before the start of the school day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at policies, pupils' records, safeguarding records and evidence of monitoring of teaching and learning. They also scrutinised 80 pupils' questionnaires and 99 parental and carers' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How high is pupils' attainment in literacy, especially writing, at all levels?
- Can the school's judgement be substantiated that teaching, provision, and leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved and are good?
- How well is pupils' spiritual and cultural development promoted throughout the school?

Information about the school

Forches Cross is an average-sized school of its type, located on a housing association estate in a market town. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools and more have statements of special needs than is typical. Many of these pupils have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, while another sizable group have difficulties with language and literacy. The school has a special nurture class for 15 pupils, mainly boys, who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school admits children in the term after their third birthday into the Early Years Foundation Stage department. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background and almost none speak English as an additional language. The school is involved in a wide range of national and local initiatives and has recently received awards for working with vulnerable pupils and those with dyslexia.

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

This is a good school. It has continued to build on the strengths noted in the last inspection as a result of highly effective leadership. Substantial improvements have been made to the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is now good. The value added to pupils' learning is significantly better than that achieved by most schools in a similar context. The school has robust systems for evaluating its own performance and its targets for improvement are well chosen. All these factors show that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Children make good progress in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and successfully build on this as they move up through the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average overall, and their achievement is good. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is higher than in English. The school has focused on improving the content of pupils' writing and this is now advancing rapidly, but pupils' basic written skills of handwriting, presentation, spelling and punctuation are not as well developed.

All pupils clearly enjoy learning and say they feel exceptionally safe and secure at school. Their good behaviour ensures a positive ethos and results in an ordered environment conducive to learning. Pupils make effective use of their good basic skills, including information and communication technology, in all subjects. They undertake a range of duties around the school and have good opportunities to contribute to decisions about their learning and wider school issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development has improved and they express their views and beliefs well. Significant improvements have been made to promote their understanding of other cultures in the wider world, but their understanding the multicultural nature of the United Kingdom is limited. Attendance is very close to that of schools in similar circumstances, but below that of most schools. The overall attendance rate is lowered by a very small group of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities whose emotional difficulties mean they do not attend regularly.

Teachers provide exciting and engaging lessons which enable pupils to learn at a good rate. Assessment is used effectively to identify targets for improvement and to tell pupils about the next steps they need to take in their learning. The care, guidance and support given by the school are outstanding and a major strength. Pupils who are potentially vulnerable are looked after exceptionally well.

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and members of the governing body shows outstanding success in raising standards and improving provision. The governing body analyses the school's performance very closely and is very influential in helping set its strategic direction. There is excellent engagement with parents and carers and the school makes outstanding use of its other partnerships to promote learning and pupils'

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well-being. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory because it has not developed pupils' understanding of the different cultures represented in Britain.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing by improving standards of handwriting, spelling and punctuation to be consistent with the improved content of their written work.
- Provide pupils with increased opportunities to explore and understand the multicultural nature of the United Kingdom so that they have a greater appreciation of others' views and perspectives.
- Improve attendance to be fully in line with that of most schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected of three-year-olds, especially in communication, language and literacy and their personal, social and emotional development. Around half arrive in the Nursery with extremely limited language. Pupils achieve well and pupils' learning and progress in lessons are good. They really enjoy school and all that it offers. In an English lesson in the Year 5/6 class, pupils made good use of their language skills to suggest suitable connecting words for a description of river features. In the nurture unit, pupils made very rapid progress in their social skills because all staff worked cooperatively to boost pupils' confidence in speaking and expressing their opinions appropriately. The content of many pupils' writing is good, showing a rapid improvement in the older classes. When producing work using word-processing, some pieces by more-able pupils are impressive. Handwritten work is marred by simple spelling errors and poor presentation.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptional progress. This is because of the outstanding teaching they receive in the nurture class and the way in which the curriculum is very well adapted to their abilities. Pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties also make outstanding progress because of the very effective behaviour management strategies. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make excellent progress because their very perceptive individual education plans target highly effective support from teaching assistants. Pupils eligible for free school meals progress well in the caring and supportive ethos of the school. All pupils, particularly the more able, are given tasks that challenge them well ♦ such as problems to solve in mathematics. Boys are now progressing as well as girls because the school has increased the number of practical and technical activities to engage their interest.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and enjoy keeping fit. For example, they enthusiastically join in an after-school aerobics club. Pupils on the school council say they feel their views are taken into account. All pupils regularly make suggestions about what they would like to learn when choosing topics and influence the direction of their learning. Pupils regularly take part in local and county activities and last year's school carol concert was attended by over 400 parents, carers and local people.

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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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	3
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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school and effective in raising pupils' attainment. It has improved considerably in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is used effectively. An outstanding feature of teaching is the very effective management of behaviour; strategies used are effective in managing all poor behaviour, including that of pupils with significant behavioural difficulties. Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows, so that learning is not as rapid as it could be. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning. Marking and assessment are used well to inform pupils about what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils are actively involved with staff in setting their own targets for improvement.

The activities provided by the curriculum are matched well to pupils' individual needs and include a good range of visits to stimulate learning. The curriculum has been adapted carefully so that it better meets the needs of boys. Enrichment activities are many and varied, and include an excellent range of clubs which are well attended.

The school is very careful to ensure that pupils receive outstanding care, support in their learning and guidance in their choices. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported exceptionally well through intervention groups and one-to-one sessions. Excellent use is made of outside support services to provide expert advice on dyslexia and how to support vulnerable pupils.

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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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and members of the governing body demonstrate determination and ambition to improve the school still further. They have been extremely effective in moving the school forward and the steps taken to monitor teaching and learning have contributed significantly to this improvement, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Chair of the Governing Body is highly effective and, as a result, the governing body is totally involved in the self-evaluation process and the school improvement plan. The school is diligent in ensuring all safeguarding requirements are met. The governing body monitors safeguarding recruitment robustly. Governors have received full training in safeguarding, child protection and health and safety and are very knowledgeable about these aspects of the school. The school has worked hard to promote equality and tackle any discrimination, and this is seen in the narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' achievement.

The school has outstanding partnerships with parents, carers and other local and national groups. All these have benefited pupils' learning and well-being greatly. The effective parents' association has contributed significantly, for example, by providing resources that the school otherwise would not be able to obtain. The family learning group is well attended and parents and carers say that it is helping them greatly in supporting their children's learning at home. The school and members of the governing body engage very well with parents and carers and the local community. Rising standards and effective management of resources indicate that the school gives good value for money.

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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	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children join the school at age three in the Nursery class with weak language and social skills. Outcomes for children are good because they thrive in the caring and well-organised environment. Their social development is a priority and as a result, behaviour is good and children work together well. The curriculum is good and is tailored to support and challenge individual children. There is a good range of resources and activities that are extensive and stimulating. The school recognises that the outdoor environment needs further development to be fully effective. The Early Years Foundation Stage department is led and managed well. Shortcomings noted in the last inspection report have been dealt with effectively. Parents and carers are actively engaged in their children's learning because of the excellent partnerships established.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Response to the questionnaire was higher than that in most primary schools. A large majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire have positive views of the school and think teaching is good. Nearly all think the school keeps their children safe and nearly all said their children enjoyed school. A small minority felt that poor behaviour was not dealt with effectively. When some parents and carers were asked about why they were concerned about behaviour, it became apparent that most of the concerns related historical incidents that no longer existed. Behaviour is good overall, especially in the older classes and the behaviour of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very well managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Forches Cross Community Primary and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 187 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	44	48	48	3	3	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	51	52	44	44	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	39	51	52	6	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	45	44	44	5	5	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	48	48	41	41	4	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	48	38	38	10	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	39	54	55	5	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	37	37	47	47	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	41	44	44	7	7	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	26	40	40	19	19	9	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	28	44	44	9	9	9	9
The school is led and managed effectively	33	33	50	51	9	9	6	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	41	46	46	7	7	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



19 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Forches Cross Community Primary and Nursery School,
Barnstaple EX32 8EF**

Thank you for making us welcome to your school when we visited you recently. We were very impressed with your politeness and good behaviour. I want to thank the school council particularly, because you gave such good answers to all our questions and you told us how much you enjoyed your school.

Yours is a good school and there are a number of things that we particularly liked.

- The youngest children really enjoy learning and have a great start to their education.
- You are all making good progress in mathematics and reading.
- You know a lot about how to be healthy and keep yourselves safe.
- Your teachers and helpers work hard to make your lessons interesting.
- The headteacher and the governing body make sure the school is well run.
- Your parents and carers are happy with the quality of education you are receiving.

These are the things we have asked the school to work on.

- Helping you to be even better at writing by making sure your handwriting is neat and joined up, your spelling is right and that you use punctuation correctly.
- Giving you more opportunities to find out about what it is like to live in other parts of the United Kingdom.
- Encouraging the few of you who do not attend well to come to school regularly.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Dennett

Lead inspector

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