

# Woolacombe School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	113175
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325768
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Pauline Robins HMI

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

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Davies-Cross
Headteacher	Sandy Brown
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 June 2006
School address	Beach Road Woolacombe Devon EX34 7BT
Telephone number	01271 870551
Fax number	01271 870556
Email address	excellence@woolacombe.devon.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited six lessons, and visited classrooms at other times during the inspection, held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and spoke on the telephone to the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school plans and policies, the tracking of pupils' progress, planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and 64 parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress that pupils make in their learning and whether this is equally as good for all groups of pupils.
- how well assessment is used to secure improvement for individuals and groups of pupils.
- the impact of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, to demonstrate consistent improvement since the last inspection.

## Information about the school

This is an oversubscribed, smaller than average primary school situated in a North Devon seaside village. It has recently undergone extensive remodelling and an additional classroom has been built to accommodate the increasing numbers. Pupils are almost exclusively White British although a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The area is represented by a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and few children are eligible for free school meals. In some year groups, the number of children joining or leaving the school at other than the expected time is significantly higher than would be expected nationally. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is currently below the national average and the number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school works closely with the on-site Busy Bees pre-school. This is not managed by the governing body but the headteacher is president of the charity which has responsibility for the provision.

## Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

### Main findings

Woolacombe is an exceptional school; as the headteacher puts it, 'This is a home for learning.' The ethos of the school is one of mutual respect and encouragement which fosters a 'can do' attitude in both pupils and staff. As a result, they are caring of each other, have high expectations and exude confidence. The driving force behind the school's success is undoubtedly the gifted and dedicated headteacher. She has led the school for a number of years with unflagging enthusiasm and determination. However, she does not work in isolation and as one member of staff explained, 'She encourages people to become leaders; everyone in this school is creative in their own way. Everything is done for the good of the children, the atmosphere is supportive not judgemental and everyone wants to develop and learn.'

The same high standards in all areas of the school's work have been maintained over a long period of time yet there is no room for complacency. The headteacher, staff and governors have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school and strive to achieve the best. As a consequence, they are constantly seeking ways in which to bring about further improvement and this confirms the judgement that there is still outstanding capacity to improve.

This is a highly inclusive school where all pupils are given the opportunity to succeed, have their needs met and feel valued. This is the result of the high standard of care and guidance that they and their parents receive. It is a reflection of the many opportunities which are on offer, even more praiseworthy given the small size of the school. The curriculum is broad, relevant to pupils' needs and their environment and innovative. The pupils' personal development and the curriculum are enhanced by a wealth of extra-curricular activities and school trips, which include residential experiences for even quite young children. What really makes this such an outstanding school is the quality of teaching and learning. Learning is fun, pupils enjoy coming to school and, as a result, they all make outstanding progress in every year group. The oral feedback teachers give to pupils about their work is excellent but they agree with inspectors that more use could be made of written comments on work completed in lessons.

The school is highly successful in utilising the small site and buildings which have 'seen better days' and are immaculately maintained. Pupils gain much from the exciting and creative outdoor area but lack the opportunities that a large indoor space would provide for whole-school assemblies and indoor games.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To further support pupils in the progress they make teachers should increase the consistency and raise the quality of written feedback in exercise books to a level which matches the very high standard displayed in the home/school reading books.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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In recent years, the school has been particularly successful in motivating boys' learning and this has contributed to progress being outstanding across all year groups and for all groups of children. This is despite an increasing number of pupils joining the school in some year groups with weaker basic skills. As a result, from a below average start to Year 1 pupils leave the school with standards which are above the national average in English and science and significantly above in mathematics. The latter is significant as the issue of progress for higher-attaining pupils in mathematics was identified as an area for development at the last inspection and has been successfully addressed. The same high standards are evident in all areas of the curriculum.

The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is impeccable although they are lively, questioning and were keen to engage inspectors in conversation about their school. Their application and attitudes towards their learning must be commended. They have been taught how to develop their independent learning skills, yet work cooperatively, having highly developed skills of listening, taking turns and giving and receiving positive criticism.

All members of the school community have great respect for each other. The atmosphere is relaxed and happy yet totally focused on learning. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. If there is any bullying they have been taught strategies to use. They know who to go to, and depending on the situation, this might be a peer mediator or member of staff. Their full participation in an excellent range of clubs and activities, together with the high profile of sport on the school curriculum, and a strong healthy eating campaign, demonstrates the pupils' adoption and understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond this small school, achieving high standards in all subjects including information and communication technology. There are excellent opportunities for them to take on additional responsibilities, for example, through election to the active school council, organising playtime refreshments and supporting younger pupils.

### *These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup> Problem with note below!! '4' is on a later page!!	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1

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

The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and engagement with pupils and their learning is impressive. Teachers plan to meet the needs of all learners and adapt their lessons quickly in response to their assessment of pupils' understanding and progress. This can be during a lesson when using their outstanding questioning skills or when marking and evaluating their lessons retrospectively. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the quality of their work and what they need to do next in order to move forward. Teachers and learning support assistants are constantly engaged in a dialogue with pupils about their learning. Written feedback in books is good, but inconsistent between classes. However, inspectors did see some exemplary practice, particularly in the home/school reading books. Staff have a thorough and in-depth knowledge of all the pupils, especially those who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A wide and effective range of different strategies is used to support these pupils' differing needs, including their social and emotional development. The school works closely with outside agencies to further enhance the quality of the support available.

The curriculum is truly outstanding and the way subjects are seamlessly linked together is a significant strength. Examples of this were seen when inspectors observed literacy taught through using geographical concepts and the extensive use of modern foreign languages in the teaching of dance and when giving instructions. The school takes full advantage of its location in planning the curriculum and makes excellent use of volunteers, partner schools and other providers to deliver specialist topics. All pupils are taught how to play a musical instrument. The before-school club provides a safe environment for pupils with fun activities which set the tone for the school day ahead. After school and at lunchtimes, the breadth and number of activities available are exceptional and enrich the pupils' learning. These include such diverse activities as surf life-saving, yoga, choir and drama.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	1
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	1

relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear and unwavering vision for her school which is supported and implemented by all staff and the governors. There is an obvious sense of purpose and, despite this being a school which thrives on innovation, it is strongly self-evaluative, and monitoring is effective in holding people to account. Excellent attention is paid by staff at all levels to ensure the highest quality of safety and care for the pupils. There are rigorous procedures in place for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. The staff are highly effective in promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils across all aspects of the school's work.

The system of 'lead governors' who hold specific areas of responsibility has proved to be effective. Governors have a good understanding of their chosen area, work closely with the staff and are actively involved in strategic planning. Their increased knowledge and accountability enable them to secure value for money when implementing changes to the school.

There is a total commitment to the promotion of community cohesion. The principle of human rights is used as a baseline against which all curriculum planning and school developments are audited and policies are written. There is excellent involvement with the local community through links with the church, businesses, senior citizens and clubs. There is a recognition that the school is situated in a relatively isolated and predominantly White British community so every opportunity is taken to expand the pupils' understanding of the wider world through residential visits, visiting speakers, creative activities and the outstanding curriculum offered.

### *These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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 community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Recent and significant improvements to the accommodation and facilities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have enabled the school to enrich its already outstanding provision. Teachers' planning is informed by exemplary assessment of the children's progress and directs the precise targeting of children's individual needs. The provision is extremely well led and planned and there is a clear emphasis on promoting children's personal, social and emotional development, alongside their writing, speaking, listening and creative skills. This has raised children's progress in these aspects to the same high level evident in other areas of learning. In past years, skills on entry have been lower than normally expected for children of this age, especially social and communication skills. Despite excellent progress, this has led to below average levels of skills on entry to Year 1. Currently, a more-able group of children is making outstanding progress and is on course to reach, and in some cases exceed, the levels of skill normally expected. This shows that children's achievement, from a range of backgrounds and starting points, is excellent.

Teaching is of the very highest quality. It is based on developing new learning through an excellent balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. An outstanding range of learning opportunities is supported by exemplary care, guidance and support from all staff and often from several voluntary helpers. Together, they keep children safe and help them to learn from and with each other and promote the children's great enjoyment. Often learning activities are innovative in the way they capture the children's interest. Examples include role play in the 'Sunny Cow Cafe' and creating 'small world' table top models and felt pictures of the local landscape, which reflect the children's, enthusiastic and very successful learning. These activities are provided indoors and outside, where the covered outdoor area now supports practical learning in all weathers.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the parents are entirely happy and a high proportion wrote at length in praise of the school. Several expressed their confidence in the overall work of the school and in the leadership and management of the headteacher. There were a number of positive comments about the quality of teaching, learning support assistants, the stimulating environment and the extra-curricular opportunities. The numbers of parental criticisms were very few and these were followed up as inspection trails during the visit. The views of the parents interviewed informally in the playground confirm the positive response in the questionnaires.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woolacombe School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 64 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 116 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	12	3	0

## 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. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woolacombe School, Woolacombe, Devon, EX34 7BT

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed every minute of our time with you. A special thank you to those pupils who came and talked to us about their work and told us about all the wonderful things you are involved in.

We agree with you and your parents that Woolacombe is an outstanding school and you clearly enjoy your lessons and the wealth of activities made available to you. Your headteacher and all the staff work very hard to provide you with the best education possible. They take great care of you and want to see you all achieve the best that you possibly can. In Reception, you get off to a fantastic start and you continue to make outstanding progress in every year group.

We particularly enjoyed looking at your stunning artwork and listening to you sing and watching you learn how to dance the Flamenco. These are just a few of the many things you learn in school and we were very impressed by the way subjects in your curriculum are linked together, for example learning literacy skills through geography. The very best thing about your school (apart from the pupils and your excellent behaviour and attitudes to your learning) is that learning is fun and your teachers plan exciting and challenging activities for you.

Even though you go to an outstanding school, your amazing headteacher, governors and staff still want the school to get better. We saw some really helpful comments written in your home/school reading books. The staff agree with the inspectors that another way to help you understand how to move forward with your learning would be for some teachers to give you more written feedback in your class books.

We know you will continue to do your very best at Woolacombe and we wish you all every success in the future. Thank you once again for making our visit such an interesting and happy experience.

Yours faithfully

Pauline Robins  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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