

Potten End Church of England First School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 117414 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 358134 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 November 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Martin Beale |

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

| | |
|--|---|
| Type of school | First |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 159 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andy Smith |
| Headteacher | Jane Senior |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 February 2008 |
| School address | Church Road Potten End, Berkhamsted HP4 2QY |
| Telephone number | 01442 865022 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 13 lessons seeing six teachers at least once, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and the Chair and another member the Governing Body. Informal discussions were also held with parents as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. Inspectors analysed 96 parental questionnaires, 50 responses to the pupil survey and 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- How successfully do teachers promote the better engagement of boys in their learning?
- How effective has the school's action been to close the gap in the attainment of girls and boys in reading and writing?
- How well does the school support the academic and personal development of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities?

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this below average sized school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A well below average proportion of the pupils have been identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery class and a Reception class. The privately run pre-school operating on the site will be subject to a separate inspection. The school has achieved Healthy Schools Status and received the Activemark award.

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 developed several outstanding features under the headteacher's strong leadership. The staff team is pulling together to move the school forward further. Parents and carers hold the work of the school in high regard as shown by their very positive responses to the inspection questionnaire. They value the very strong partnership between home and school and have great confidence that staff will continually strive to do the best for their children. One parent summed up the views of many when writing, 'We could not wish for a better school. The teachers are friendly, approachable and care about the pupils very much'

Pupils say how proud they are of their school and how much they enjoy learning as shown by their hard work and high levels of attendance. They feel very safe and are certain that any concerns they bring to the attention of staff will be dealt with quickly. The pupils' excellent behaviour adds much to the happy and purposeful atmosphere around the school. They understand very clearly how factors such as diet and exercise can help them to stay fit and healthy. They have a voice in school developments and are taking a very keen interest in environmental issues such as helping the school to become more sustainable and in promoting recycling. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

The pupils have a very firm platform for success for the next stage of their education. The speed with which the youngest children settle into the Nursery and Reception classes and the interesting activities provided, result in them making good progress. This continues across the rest of the school and attainment is high by the time the pupils move on to middle school at the end of Year 4. Virtually all pupils reach and the majority exceed levels expected for their age, particularly in reading.

The school provides interesting learning experiences during and beyond the school day. Teaching is good but at times it is inconsistent in its impact on the pupils' learning. There is much interesting teaching that motivates and uses strategies to engage pupils, particularly the boys such as through role play activities and the skilled use of new technology such as film clips. These stimulate ideas for writing. Many lessons are challenging, but questioning does not always probe the pupils' thinking and marking does not consistently lead to pupils being clear about how to improve their work. Furthermore, support staff are not always deployed effectively throughout each part of a lesson.

The outstanding provision for the pupils' care, guidance and support is based on rigorously identifying each pupil's learning needs and taking targeted action to support their academic and personal development. This is particularly effective in enabling pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to thrive and make good progress towards their personal goals. The outstanding partnerships forged with other agencies to extend

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learning and provide additional expertise in support of the pupils whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable ensure that all groups of learners do equally well.

Senior staff and governors take their responsibilities towards promoting community cohesion very seriously. They use their sharply focused self-evaluation of the school to plan for its improvement. Action to improve identified weaknesses has been successful. For example, in closing the gap in the attainment of boys and girls in reading and writing, by finding more interesting contexts for writing, introducing male role models as volunteers and broadening the range of literature used. Performance has been sustained at a high level as a result of the challenging targets the school sets itself. The school's recent record coupled with the continual drive to become even better give it good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring the quality of all teaching more consistently up to that of the best by:
 - using questioning more skilfully to probe the pupils' thinking and respond to their answers
 - marking pupils' work more effectively so that they can be clearer about how to improve their work
 - deploying support staff to maximise their impact on the pupils' learning at every stage of the lesson.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The pupils' basic skills develop at a good pace. They learn to apply these skills across subjects and to help them to solve problems. They are keen and enthusiastic learners who concentrate on their work and persevere even when finding activities difficult. They greatly enjoy discussing ideas with each other and participating in role play activities. Their excellent behaviour in lessons contributes significantly to their good learning.

Pupils are very considerate towards each other, show great respect for adults and respond to their teachers with the minimum of fuss. The school helps them to understand how to identify and cope with risks they might face such when using the internet. Pupils make a very substantial and highly valued contribution to school life as representatives on the school and eco councils. They take on responsibilities with relish such as supporting each other to feel safe in the playground. They help older members of the local community and have taken an active role in the regeneration of a wildlife habitat. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the school's drive to promote healthy lifestyles as reflected in the Healthy Schools Status and Activemark award. They enjoy sports and other vigorous exercise and are great advocates for adopting healthy lifestyles.

Pupils value and respect the world around them and are developing close links with a school in Uganda, exchanging letters with pupils there and learning about their different lifestyles. They have a very strong sense of right and wrong, conduct themselves sensibly and are able to take responsibility for their behaviour. Remembrance Day celebrations offered opportunities to see their concern for the situation of others through their thoughtful responses.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

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?

The quality of teaching is at least good in the large majority of lessons, with outstanding features at times. The wide range of tasks undertaken in a very effective Year 2 English lesson stimulated the pupils thinking about the work of Florence Nightingale. By explaining the lesson's objectives the pupils were clear about the purpose behind the tasks they were undertaking and greatly enjoyed playing the part of a soldier and the nurse. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of all pupils and to provide challenge for the more able, although support staff are not always effectively deployed during whole-class sessions. Marking and other feedback give the pupils a picture of how well they are doing but time is not always given for them to follow through suggestions about how to improve.

Activities provided are imaginative, well planned and enriched by a wide range of clubs and other activities, including providing access to extra-curricular activities for pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Programmes are adapted to meet individual needs and key skills are promoted well across subjects. However, the curriculum is awaiting further review to link aspects of learning even more closely. The pupils' experiences benefit from outside expertise in sport and include two residential trips for Year 4 pupils. Boys have become more engaged in learning, particularly in English; the school provides opportunities that bring writing to life, widens the books available and invites in members of the local community and sixth form students from a local school to read with selected pupils.

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This is a very caring and nurturing school environment where the pupils' welfare is right at the heart of the work of all staff. This is often enhanced when the school pulls in the expertise of outside agencies to provide specialist advice and support to assist staff in the prompt identification and coordination of specialist support for pupils. The very well organised induction and transition arrangements enable pupils to settle in quickly and older pupils to move on smoothly to the next stage of their learning.

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's vision for the school is based on a relentless drive to raise achievement and promote equality of opportunity. Expectations are high and targets are challenging. Teamwork is strong with staff sharing ideas and working towards a common purpose. This includes observing the teaching of their colleagues and experts in other schools so that they can improve their own teaching. The careful analysis of assessment data is used to check the performance of different groups, although the headteacher has identified that this is rather cumbersome and so has introduced a more efficient electronic system. Nevertheless, this has enabled the school to identify and close the gap in the attainment of boys and girls in reading and writing.

Governance is good. Governors apply their expertise well to meet the needs of the school and are closely involved in shaping its future direction. Through monitoring the school's performance they are able to hold it to account for tackling improvement. The governing body ensures that everyone is kept safe through the rigorous implementation of policies, by carefully vetting all those who work in the school and ensuring that staff training is effective.

Staff and members of the governing body recognise the excellent value for money the school gains from its links with others. These help to extend the opportunities provided for the pupils and to support their welfare. The partnership between home and school is very productive, particularly in helping parents to support their children's learning and in their involvement in a wide range of the school's activities. Staff and members of the governing body fully understand the context within which the school operates and use this to plan a wide range of very effective actions to enhance community cohesion including strengthening international links with Romania and Uganda.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

From skills at least as expected for their age on entry, children make good progress so that almost all reach and the large majority exceed goals for their age by the time they enter Year 1. This is as a result of strong links with parents, good systems that help to smooth the children's start and careful planning of activities which address each child's need. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well and the staff team works closely together to identify where improvements can be made.

Adults interact positively with the children and provide plenty of support and encouragement which enables them to settle quickly into the daily routines.

Regular counting and sorting activities as well as the exploration of letters and sounds help to develop the children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Enjoyable story-times in which the children act out the plot and regular writing practice are assisting the development of their reading and writing. Frequent opportunities for the children to contribute their ideas and knowledge are contributing to their very well developed social skills. They are very confident, articulate and can happily discuss their work with adults. Their behaviour is excellent. Children greatly enjoy each other's company and form positive relationships at work and at play.

The children's health and welfare are promoted well. They have regular access to water, fruit and milk at snack time. Their awareness of other cultures is promoted well. For example, when exploring Divali patterns and making candle holders. The enjoyable range of activities which includes role play, painting and model making sustains the children's interest well. Joint planning of activities between the Nursery and Reception classes supports continuity for the children's learning. The teaching team links learning between inside and outdoors, but the lack of a covered outdoor area limits children's activities during inclement weather.

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

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 | 1 |
| 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

The inspection team supports the very positive views of parents. They are happy with virtually all aspects of the school and are almost unanimous in judging that it is led and managed effectively. Almost all parents report that their children enjoy school and are making good progress. They feel teaching is good. They agree that the school helps their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle and prepares them well for the future. Inspection evidence also supports their views about the strength of the partnership between home and school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Potten End Church of England First 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 96 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 159 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 74 | 77 | 21 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 68 | 71 | 28 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 48 | 50 | 44 | 46 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 40 | 42 | 54 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 62 | 65 | 33 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 54 | 56 | 40 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 51 | 53 | 40 | 42 | 2 | 2 | 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) | 46 | 48 | 42 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 45 | 47 | 49 | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 47 | 49 | 46 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 33 | 34 | 59 | 61 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 55 | 57 | 40 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 68 | 71 | 28 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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.



15 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Potten End Church of England First School, Berkhamsted, HP4 2QY

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We agree with you that Potten End First is a good and improving school. You clearly enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take outstanding care of you and do the utmost to keep you safe. Your behaviour is excellent, and we were impressed by the way you work hard and try to do your best at all times. Well done for maintaining your attendance at such a high level.

You make good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for the future. Almost all of you reach the levels expected in reading, writing and mathematics by the time you reach the end of Year 4 and many of you do better than this. This is because you are taught well and have interesting things to learn. Those of you who find learning more difficult also make good progress because of the support you receive.

Everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. There is one thing in particular we have asked the teachers and other adults to do.

Bring all teaching and learning up to the quality of the best.

You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard. Well done for showing pride in your school.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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