



Inkpen Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109817
Local Authority West Berkshire
Inspection number 278280
Inspection date 11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Weavers Lane
School category	Community		Inkpen
Age range of pupils	4-11		Hungerford RG17 9QE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01488 668219
Number on roll (school)	47	Fax number	01488 668219
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Philip Day
		Headteacher	Mr Keith Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 1999		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

Inkpen is a very small rural school south of Hungerford. There are three classes, one for Reception children and pupils in Years 1 and 2, one for Years 3 and 4, and one for Years 5 and 6. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage, and most live in the village. In most cases, their home circumstances are generally more advantaged than those of pupils in most other schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The number on roll has declined since the last inspection. Most of the teaching staff, including the headteacher, have been appointed within the past two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inkpen is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has a number of strengths, most of which relate to the good quality of care provided for pupils and the good standard of their personal development and well-being. Pupils grow in confidence because they are well looked after and encouraged to play an active part in the life of their school and the wider community. They enjoy all the school has to offer, and are respectful to and appreciative of all the adults who work there. A particular strength is that the school is good at promoting a sense of 'family' in which all individuals are well known, valued, and fully included in all activities. One parent summarised the views of many others when writing, 'My children love the school and are very happy. The staff and other children make them feel so welcome and safe.'

Children are given a satisfactory start to their education in the Foundation Stage. They start school shortly before their fifth birthday, and settle in really well. This is because the 'Inkspots' pre-school sessions take place in a room adjacent to the classroom for the youngest pupils, and Reception and pre-school children join together for some activities. Information relating to the achievement of pupils in the Foundation Stage has only recently been collated by the school. This shows that last year the attainment of children transferring from Reception to Year 1 was above average. However, because of previous weaknesses in the curriculum, attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage is more likely to have been average in the past.

There is considerable year-on-year fluctuation in the attainment of year groups. This is a common feature of very small schools and occurs because variations in the performance of each individual can have a disproportionate effect on the standards overall. Therefore the results of the National Curriculum tests for a single year need to be treated with some caution. A more reliable measure of the school's performance is gained by looking at results over a period of time. This shows that, in Year 2, standards are normally average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. In Year 6, standards are above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. Given their starting point, this profile of performance shows that pupils achieve satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress between Reception and Year 6. They make good progress in English between Years 3 and 6 because of the strong focus that the school has placed on improving pupils' writing.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school because key areas of the school's provision such as the quality of teaching and the curriculum, are both satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved, and some is good.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. This is because the educational direction provided has not yet resulted in ensuring that all pupils make good progress. The leadership has, however, created a good climate for learning through the promotion of pupils' skills as independent and self-assured members of the community. The headteacher shows a strong commitment to raising standards, and carefully monitors the performance of all the pupils. The systems used for this monitoring help give a clear picture of what each individual can do. However, the

information gathered is not yet helping to raise standards. This is because the targets set for pupils to achieve are not sharp enough. As a result, teachers are unable to measure pupils' progress in achieving their targets with any degree of accuracy. Furthermore, the plan of action to be taken to help pupils meet their targets is not yet structured enough. The school knows that this needs to be the next step in developing its systems for assessing pupils and tracking their learning. Teachers' skills in providing subject leadership are underdeveloped. This is recognised by the teachers themselves, particularly in respect of mathematics and science.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of information about what pupils already know to set more challenging targets for them, and ensure that pupils' progress in meeting their targets is checked with greater precision.
- Improve the skills of teaching staff to enable them to work effectively as subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Since his appointment two years ago, the headteacher has introduced a number of measures designed to improve the achievement of the pupils. These are beginning to have an impact, as seen in the good performance in English.

All pupils progress at the same steady rate, regardless of gender or ability. In all cases, their achievement is affected by the weaknesses in the school's systems for setting targets for them to reach. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do not benefit as well as they could from the good quality individual help given to them in class because the targets set out in their individual education plans lack precision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is evident in their above average rates of attendance. Pupils' behaviour is good. In closely supervised situations, such as when they come into the hall for assembly, it is impeccable. At playtimes, boys and girls play happily together. One Year 4 pupil summed up the feelings of all pupils at play by saying, 'There are occasional upsets, but mostly everyone gets on well together and they're fun!' Behaviour in lessons is generally good, but standards occasionally slip when pupils are not challenged well enough. In these situations, some pupils become restless and are inattentive.

A particularly noteworthy feature of the school is the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. Pupils show a keen awareness of right and wrong, and develop a strong sense of community through their school council and the 'house' system. They also give good support to the wider community through fundraising and

participation in village activities. Pupils' good spiritual awareness is evident in the respect they show for one another. Their ability to reflect on how well they are doing at school, which is another aspect of their spiritual development, is inhibited because they do not have clear enough targets to achieve. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep safe. Their good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise has been recognised through a 'Healthy School' award. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next phase of their education and to become life-long learners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers relate well to their pupils, give clear explanations and instructions, and organise their classes effectively.

A weakness in otherwise competent teaching is that work is not always pitched at the right level for all pupils within the mixed-age classes. This occurs because teachers do not always make good use of the information they have about what pupils already know. However, the good adult-to-pupil ratios within the small classes enable adjustments to be made for each individual as the mismatches become evident.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has worked hard in recent years to improve the curriculum for its youngest children, and is now meeting their needs satisfactorily. It successfully provides activities to cover all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage while at the same time meeting requirements for the National Curriculum in Key Stage 1. For example, similar basic skills are taught separately, but at the same time, to Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils because the school makes very good use of the available space and the skills of its teaching assistants.

The weakness in the curriculum stems from the underdeveloped systems for assessing pupils. This means that sometimes planning does not provide sufficient challenges to meet the needs of all pupils within the mixed-age classes.

The school provides a very good range of activities for its pupils out of school hours on four days a week. These are greatly appreciated by pupils, who spoke enthusiastically about the choices available to them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of the school's pastoral care is outstanding. The school is vigilant about health and safety and child-protection matters and keeps good records of the checks made on the background of the staff and other adults who have contact with the pupils. The relative weakness in an otherwise strong area of the school's provision is the quality of academic guidance provided for pupils. This is not as good as it should be because the school's systems for tracking the progress made by pupils, and setting challenging targets for each individual to achieve, are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is good capacity for future improvement. The headteacher and staff work well together as a team. Together they have created an orderly and calm environment for learning. They are clearly committed to raising standards and are being successful. Key priorities for improvement have been identified and are being tackled through a clear school development plan.

The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is satisfactory. However, its judgements about the quality of some of its provision, such as teaching, are too generous and not linked closely enough to the achievement of pupils.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors are committed to and supportive of the school. However, they do not always hold it to account in a rigorous enough manner and sometimes rely too heavily on the headteacher for information.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me and being so helpful when I came to inspect your school. I am writing to tell you what I think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

I think that your school is satisfactory, with some things that are good. I think that by the time you leave at the end of Year 6 your work is as good as the work done by children in most other schools in mathematics and science. In English, you are doing better than other schools because you have been working hard to improve your writing.

Here are some of the things I liked best about your school:

- your school is a happy place to be in. Everyone is friendly and welcoming. You get on well with each other and you behave well
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are safe and are really well looked after.

Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school want it to be even better, so this is what I have suggested:

- I would like your teachers to look more closely at how well you are getting on, and try to set you harder targets to reach; the reason for this is that I would like to see you do even better than you already are; I'm sure that you are ready for this challenge!
- I would also like your teachers to find out more about being in charge of subjects like mathematics and science; this will help them to make your work even better than it is already.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector