



Ponsbourne St Mary's Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 117396
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280066
Inspection dates 7 March 2006 to 8 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Jackie Cousins LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newgate Street Village
School category	Voluntary controlled		SG13 8RA
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01707 872395
Number on roll	81	Fax number	01707 872779
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Gill Sutcliffe
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Tracey Gaiteri

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 7 March 2006 - 8 March 2006	Inspection number 280066
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small primary school is located in a village near Hatfield. Year groups are small, mostly between nine and eleven pupils. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. When the youngest pupils start school their levels of knowledge and understanding are in line those expected for 4-year-olds. Overall, the school has a below-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. However, some year groups have an above-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and so their overall starting point is below that expected nationally. Some year groups have an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are from White British families and a few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ponsbourne St. Mary's Church of England Primary School is an outstandingly effective school. The school is a little modest in its overall evaluation of itself and judges itself to be good. This is a popular and oversubscribed school. The headteacher is an excellent leader. One parent said, 'She has made huge changes in the organisation and management of the school.' The subject leaders and governors lead the school effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants are really committed and care very well for pupils. The school works extremely effectively with parents. Another parent said, 'This is a very good school with an excellent atmosphere and very caring helpful staff at all levels.' The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Children are given a good start in the Reception Class because of effective teaching and leadership. Standards by the beginning of Year 1 are slightly above average. In the present Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are substantially above average. Most pupils make particularly effective progress at the school because of outstanding teaching. Pupils' enjoyment in their work is extremely good and they behave particularly well. Pupils' contribution to the school and to the outside community is outstanding. Exciting activities are planned. Pupils take part in art weeks and most take part in drama performances annually. Assessment activities are used well. However, not all pupils know how to improve their own work using personal targets. Pupils do not have the use of a good range of equipment for gymnastics. Improvement since the last inspection has been particularly effective. For example, subject leaders have significantly improved the responsibilities they take on. Play facilities for the Reception Class have been considerably developed. The school is in a very strong position to improve in the future because of the effective school development plan and very strong leadership of the headteacher. The school provides extremely good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to strengthen the use of specific targets with pupils so that they learn to evaluate their own work and become more involved in deciding what they need to do to improve. - Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their gymnastics skills using wall bars, benches and climbing equipment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are high and achievement is outstanding. When children enter the school their levels of knowledge and understanding are average in the key skills of reading, writing, speech and communication. However, with such small year groups, standards on entry vary from year to year. For example, some year groups have a significant proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Children get off to a good start in the Reception Class so that standards are slightly above average by the beginning of Year 1 in most areas of learning. This is due to the effective use of

teaching through play and practical activities. The majority of these pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 from an average starting point. Standards in writing, reading, mathematics and science are above average by the end of Year 2. Achievement for Year 6 pupils in 2005 was in the top 10% of the country. Pupils progressed particularly well from below-average level of knowledge and understanding in Year 2. This is because teachers have particularly high expectations of pupils and key skills are taught really effectively. Pupils' achievement has been consistently at least good for the last three years. School data show that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress. The majority of pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties achieve well and some attain average standards. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged extremely effectively so that they are learning different ways of carrying out their own research projects. These pupils chose their own area to investigate and some are looking into the different ways boys and girls work in lessons. Standards in Year 6 were above average in national tests in 2005 even though this year group contained an above-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Current standards of reading are significantly above average. Mathematics and science standards are high. For example, many pupils in Year 6 wrote effective conclusions to investigations on sound that showed a good level of knowledge and understanding. The school met challenging targets in 2005.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very effectively developed. Pupils' multicultural awareness is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and all it offers for both their academic and personal development. They show obvious pride in the standards of work they produce. Attendance is in line with the national average. The school is extremely effective in encouraging pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils take part in 'Shake and Wake' sessions most days as well as two physical education sessions every week. Pupils learn to stay safe effectively in a variety of situations. They make an exceptionally good contribution to the community, especially when most of the school makes products during a design and technology week to sell at the Christmas Fair, to which the whole village is invited. They write to, and raise money to support, a boy in Bangladesh. The school council has been instrumental in choosing new playground equipment which will encourage pupils to exercise at break times. Pupils are developing some good independent learning skills and usually work hard. They are learning useful skills in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) that will contribute effectively to their future economic well-being. Pupils have really good social skills and show increasing maturity as they move up through the school. Older pupils have been trained very effectively to help younger ones solve friendship problems in the playground. Behaviour is good and contributes strongly to the quality of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. This allows pupils to make particularly effective progress in learning basic and complex skills. Many strengths are seen in the quality of teaching; these include the use of very good teaching methods which make learning effective. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 deepened their understanding of poetry and others' feelings by taking part in drama activities linked to their literacy work. Practical activities are often used to make learning memorable. Teachers use open-ended questioning extremely well. For example, in an outstanding Year 5 and 6 lesson, questioning and resources were used very effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of how to create a good advert. The speed at which pupils were working in this lesson meant that they were learning to work extremely quickly and accurately at the same time. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and so they learn to investigate ideas for themselves. ICT is used well to make lessons exciting. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive a particularly good level of support from the co-ordinator and effective teaching assistants. Assessment is good and is used effectively. Pupils' achievement is tracked well in reading, writing, mathematics and science from the Nursery to Year 6. Extra support is given to pupils as and when they need it, and its effect is carefully assessed. Teachers do discuss pupils' targets and allow them to evaluate their own success against specific criteria so that they learn how to improve their work. However, this good practice is not fully established in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and other activities are good. Work is suitably matched to the needs of pupils, especially the higher attainers and those with learning difficulties. The school includes all pupils particularly well and provides good opportunities for all learners to make progress and develop effectively. There is good provision for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. ICT is used well in many subjects. For example, older pupils use spreadsheets effectively to make complex calculations, using formulae well, and produce interesting presentations in connection with their work on the Tudors. All external requirements are met, and a good range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. The many visitors give pupils new insights into the local community and the wider world. There is a good range of clubs to extend pupils' involvement and enjoyment of sports and some in the arts. The school has no hall and does not have access to challenging physical education apparatus. This means that pupils cannot develop their gymnastics skills effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and support for pupils and the guidance given to them is outstanding. Pupils are highly valued as individuals within a supportive and strongly Church of England environment. All the parents who responded to the questionnaire said that their children were well cared for. Pupils strongly confirmed that if ever they were troubled they would have no hesitation in seeking help from staff with whom they have close and trusting relationships. Child protection and health and safety procedures are clear and understood by all staff. The school makes all required checks on adults working in the school so that pupils are kept as safe as they can be. Kindness is evident in this closely knit school community, which is particularly evident when older pupils look after the younger ones. Parents are very pleased about how happy their children are. The school takes note of pupils' ideas through the school council. The idea of 'buddies' who have been specially trained to assist younger ones to sort things out in the play ground was suggested through the school council. Academic guidance is good and the use of targets with pupils is developing. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is particularly good. It helps them to make effective progress and feel good about their success.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding overall. The extremely effective leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the senior teacher, means the school is always looking for ways to improve the quality of education. The headteacher has amazing vision. She listens very carefully to parents' views and is starting up a parent forum where the school development plan and other initiatives can be discussed. The leadership continues to be successfully focused on maintaining high standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of learners. The integration of pupils from all backgrounds is outstanding and central to the school's vision. The senior leadership team is continually monitoring and evaluating the best ways to support all groups of pupils. For example, the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs is always looking for the most effective ways to teach these children through programmes specifically tailored to pupils' needs which are particularly effective. Provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is exceptionally good because not only are they challenged well in lessons but they are learning about how to carry out research projects for themselves. Any barriers to learning are tackled and removed as much as they can be to ensure that all have opportunities to succeed and do their best. Staff work well as a team and share ideas. Most subject leaders manage their area well. The tracking of pupils' progress is analysed very carefully in English, mathematics and science. Use of personal targets is improving and the school recognises it could do more to make them even more effective. Through rigorous and effective self-evaluation, the school has very good evidence to substantiate its strengths. Areas identified for improvement have been incorporated into a very good school improvement plan. The views of parents and pupils have been listened to and they

are starting to contribute to school improvement. The school has improved the accommodation and resources well since the last inspection but it does not have a hall or access to space and equipment where pupils can develop their gymnastics skills. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and has good control of its finances and spending plans. The school had a considerable amount of money saved from the previous year and this has been spent effectively to improve ICT equipment and building a small extension. As a result, the school provides good value for money. Governance of the school is good. A programme of visits is being used to improve governors' level of knowledge. All the legal requirements are met and the governors have carried out their responsibilities well in this regard.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	2	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	2	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	2	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	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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	2	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?	2	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	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

Thank you for helping me find out about your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and watch one assembly. I really enjoyed your super singing. You are lucky to attend such an outstanding school. Really good things about your school include the fact that: - you work incredibly hard in lessons - behaviour is very good - you do good work in English, mathematics and science by Year 6 - your headteacher has excellent ideas about ways to improve the school - teachers work hard to make lessons interesting - teachers and teaching assistants care for you very well - musical and drama productions and trips out make school life more interesting - you are encouraged very effectively to lead healthy and safe lives - older pupils look after the younger ones really well - you help to support people in the local community and people in other countries who are less fortunate than you very effectively. I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. I hope that you will help teachers by listening to them carefully. The most important things are: - Using personal targets better so that you learn to recognise what you have done well and what you need to do next to progress even faster. - Improving the equipment you use for gymnastics. Keep up the terrific work at Ponsbourne St. Mary's Church of England Primary School.