

Worcester, Pitmaston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116769
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	290629
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	602
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	A Bisson
Headteacher	F.N.I. Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2002
School address	Malvern Road Worcester WR2 4ZF
Telephone number	01905 423710
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pitmaston is a very large primary school. Relatively few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. They leave with above average standards, having achieved satisfactorily. Children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning, but good progress in mathematics. From Year 1 on, progress in mathematics is satisfactory. Progress in English is good in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory in other years. Progress is consistently good in science. This variation in progress is a result of variations in teaching, although overall it is satisfactory. Science teaching is consistently good as is the teaching of English in Years 1 and 2. Occasionally, teaching in the Foundation Stage is not stretching the higher ability children enough. In mathematics lessons in Years 1 to 6, tasks are not matched closely enough to the pupils' needs, so some find it too easy and others too hard. The pace of lessons is often slowed by the teacher talking for too long, so pupils' keenness to get on is not capitalised upon. Throughout the school, teachers use their good relationships with pupils to maintain high standards of discipline. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because the school provides a lot of good quality support for them and works particularly well with outside agencies.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are considerable strengths, brought about by the good curriculum and the good quality care, guidance and support they receive. Teachers place a strong emphasis on values, such as consideration for others, so pupils think about their actions and the impact they may have on those around them. Pupils are polite and well behaved. They enjoy coming to school because they have lots of friends and can participate in many extra activities.

The school has improved steadily in recent years, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. The school's managers are quick to spot any underachievement and improve the curriculum to compensate. However, achievement is not better than satisfactory because managers are not identifying or tackling the underlying weaknesses in teaching that would iron out variations in pupils' achievement. The school's own evaluation of teaching and of its overall performance is generous because it does not compare the results of monitoring of teaching with outcomes, in terms of pupils' achievement, to explain any mismatch between what the school provides and how well pupils do.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress made by pupils in those years and subjects where it is satisfactory by increasing the pace of lessons and ensuring that teachers set work that is suitably demanding.
- Carry out more rigorous checks on teaching to identify areas that need to be improved and ensure teachers are given clear advice on what they need to do to raise the quality of teaching to a consistently good level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. At some stage in their education, all pupils will make some good progress, but there is variation between different year groups and subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities do well.

When children join the Foundation Stage, their standards are average for their age. They make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning, but good progress in mathematics, so their number skills are above average by the start of Year 1. From Year 1 onwards pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics and leave Year 6 with standards that are above average.

Pupils start Year 1 with average standards in English. They make good progress, so by the end of Year 2 their standards are above average. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and standards remain above average. Progress in science is consistently good across all years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on well with each other and with their teachers. Pupils are keen to come to school, as shown by their good attendance. They are polite, well behaved and usually concentrate well on their tasks. On occasions, pupils' attention wanes when they are inactive for too long. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work together amicably, respect the feelings of others and have a well developed sense of fair play.

Pupils have a strong social and community awareness, and are keen fund raisers for charities. They respond well when given responsibility, for example as members of the school council where they show their ability to come up with new ideas. Such initiative is not so evident in lessons because pupils do not get many opportunities to make decisions for themselves. Pupils are safety conscious and understand the importance of healthy eating - no sweets and crisps at breaks in this school! Pupils' satisfactory academic progress helps them to be soundly prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The variation in pupils' progress is a result of differences in the quality of teaching between years and subjects. There are some consistently good aspects of teaching. Teachers use their good relationships with pupils to manage behaviour well, so there is no disruption to lessons. Pupils often enjoy the activities, such as making cakes that resemble rocks in science, because they make learning fun. Explanations at the start of lessons are always clear, but in Years 3 and 4 they often go on for too long, which slows the pace of learning when pupils are desperate to get more involved and do things for themselves.

The biggest variation in teaching is seen in the use of tasks that are suitably challenging. In English in Years 1 and 2, for example, tasks are demanding and teachers take great care to build upon what pupils have previously learnt. In other years, including the Foundation Stage, and in mathematics, similar tasks are often given to all pupils, except those with learning difficulties, regardless of their ability. This leads to some pupils finding the tasks too easy, while others struggle because the work is too hard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of interesting and enjoyable opportunities for pupils. They successfully learn French and Spanish, take part in many sporting activities and perform in

concerts. Sports teams in particular are very successful. The well planned personal, social and health curriculum makes a significant contribution to developing pupils' good understanding of how to act as responsible members of society. Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of trips they go on, while the numerous visitors to the school give a 'real life' dimension to their studies.

Pupils get many opportunities to develop their literacy skills in other subjects, especially in Years 1 and 2 where pupils are questioned about the meaning of very demanding words. There are fewer opportunities to practise their numeracy skills in Years 1 to 6, but the strong emphasis placed on mathematics in the Foundation stage curriculum ensures children make good gains in their number skills. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties is well planned and carefully matched to the individual's needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after. Pupils are very content at school: 'The teachers are really kind and do all they can to make sure you are happy,' commented one pupil. Child protection and health and safety checks are particularly thorough. The school works very well with external agencies to provide support for pupils when needed. The number of teaching assistants is relatively high, so pupils with learning difficulties get lots of support. Pupils benefit from good support and guidance for their personal development. Attendance, for example, is improving year on year as a result of the emphasis placed on the importance of coming to school whenever possible.

Although too early to see real benefits in terms of achievement, targets introduced in September 2006 are working well in English, where pupils receive good advice on how to improve their work. The work is easier in mathematics so pupils make fewer errors, which makes it difficult for teachers to identify areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's managers successfully place a great deal of emphasis on providing an environment where all pupils are valued and where good attitudes are developed. The same emphasis has not been placed on improving achievement. Achievement over the past few years has remained satisfactory, with some good aspects, such as progress in science, and the odd sign of underachievement. When weaknesses in performance are identified, managers are quick to make effective changes to the curriculum, such as changing the way that pupils are grouped. This often addresses weakness but does not secure long-term improvements to teaching. This is because checks on the quality of lessons are not rigorous enough. Too much emphasis is placed on identifying what works, rather than pointing out aspects that need to be improved. Managers, therefore, do not have as clear an understanding as they need to have about the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. The school is therefore not always in the position of being able to make clear links between the quality of teaching and how well pupils progress. This leads to a generous view of the school's performance. This is particularly the case for governors, who rely heavily on the headteacher for establishing their view of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
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	2
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	2

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	2
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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school. You were very well mannered when talking to us, and helped us a lot with our work. You clearly enjoy coming to school and have lots of friends. You get on with one another. All the adults take good care of you and make sure you are happy and safe. You told us that you particularly enjoy the 'fun' things that you do in lessons. Overall, we found that the school is doing a satisfactory job. You do well in science, and in English in Years 1 and 2, but could do better in your mathematics lessons. At some point you all do well in your lessons, but we have asked the school to make sure you do well all the time. We have suggested that lessons are checked more carefully to find out what works well and what could be better. We have given the people who run the school a few ideas about the things to look for. In particular, some of you find the work a bit easy, while others find it a bit too hard. So, we have asked your teachers to try to give you work that is just at the right level.

We noticed as soon as we came in to school how calm and quiet it is. This is because you listen to what teachers tell you about how important it is to behave well and work hard. Sometimes you start to daydream a little in lessons, so try to concentrate all the time, even when you are keen to get on with something else. You told us you like all the extra clubs, and especially the sports that help you to stay healthy. We were most impressed by the healthy things you choose to eat at breaks and lunchtime.

The people who run the school keep a close eye on how well you are doing, so they know if you start to fall behind. When this happens, they are quick to make sure it does not go on for too long and that you can catch up. We think that the ideas we have given them will help make the school a good one and make sure that the progress you make in English, mathematics and science is as good as your behaviour, manners and consideration for others.

Thank you once again for being so kind to us. We really did enjoy ourselves in your school.