

Polehampton Church of England Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109981
Local Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Inspection number	310163
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	159
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Miss Helen Ball
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Hermitage Drive Reading RG10 9HS
Telephone number	01189 340246
Fax number	01189 349119

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the villages of Twyford, Charvil and Ruscombe near Reading. It is popular and oversubscribed. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage with a very small number from other, mostly Asian, backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, is below that found nationally. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy Schools Status and Sport England Activemark. It is currently working towards Certification by the National Association for Able Children in Education and a BECTA award for innovative use of technology.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Polehampton is a good school. It is working with determination to make all aspects of its provision outstanding. An extremely strong caring ethos pervades all aspects of its work. Children are extremely proud of their school and sing with great enthusiasm the words of their school song:

We give our all and show respect
We always do our very best
We listen and share
And show we care
We're Polehampton Infants!

Pupils' personal development and their care, support and guidance are of outstanding quality. One parent summed up the views of a great many in saying, 'The dedication and care that has gone into my son's personal and educational development is exemplary and is of an exceptionally high standard.' Pupils feel extremely safe and thrive in this friendly and remarkably supportive environment. They behave extremely well, help and support each other, and are enthusiastic learners. These are significant factors underpinning their good achievement.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress because their social and learning needs are well met. This good progress continues as they move through the school and, by the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Achievement is good because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are good at planning challenging work that meets the needs of all the ability groups within their classes. Pupils fully understand their challenging targets and respond extremely well to their teacher's high expectations of them. Pupils enjoy working independently and using their initiative to explore their own ideas. However, teachers do not always give them sufficient opportunities to work in this way and their progress is not as rapid as it could be.

Pupils really enjoy school because the good curriculum provides an outstanding range of exciting and challenging enrichment activities including musical, sporting and artistic experiences. This is another factor contributing towards the pupils' enjoyment of learning. A well planned personal, social, and health education programme promotes these skills very effectively. The school has recently introduced a novel use of information and communication technology (ICT) to provide 'interactive learning platforms' which pupils can access from home and school. The school is building well on this good start to using ICT skills to support pupils' learning.

Leadership and management are good. Polehampton Infants has been on a challenging voyage of self-improvement since the last inspection. Teachers and parents are adamant that the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and her deputy underpinned the skilful and successful navigation of these previously uncharted waters. Complacency is not tolerated. Parents, teachers, pupils and governors are working together as a team with commitment and determination to make their school outstanding in every respect. Less experienced coordinators are gaining confidence in monitoring school initiatives so they can increase their impact on the quality of learning as well as the rate at which pupils make progress. The resulting well-focussed actions are bringing about sustained school improvement. This confirms the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter school from a wide range of pre-school settings and experiences. Very good induction procedures ensure they quickly settle in a warm, fun and orderly environment. The curriculum provides a good balance between those activities led by an adult and those initiated by children, including effective use of an exciting and challenging outdoor area. Consequently, children make a confident and positive start to school life. Most children join the school with standards that are similar to that expected for their age. They achieve well and most reach levels expected for their age by the time they start in Year 1 and a good number exceed them. The quality of teaching is good. The good start children make in the Foundation Stage prepares them well for the next stage in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities during lessons for pupils to work independently and explore their own ideas in order to sustain their rapid progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Given their starting points, all groups of pupils are achieving well and making good progress. Pupils aged 7 years are well on track to meet their challenging targets this year and attain higher than average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has successfully addressed last year's dip in the numbers attaining the higher levels in writing. Achievement is good because teachers have improved the way they track pupils' progress and use the resulting information to address quickly any underachievement. These very detailed and regular assessments show that all groups of pupils are making good progress as they move from year to year.

Those pupils who struggle with reading and writing, and those very few whose first language is not English also make good progress and achieve well. This occurs because of the very good quality help and support they receive both in and out of the classroom.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their extremely positive attitudes and high levels of enjoyment have a significant impact on their good progress. Pupils are proud of their school and make an excellent contribution to its smooth running by taking on extra responsibilities. The very active school council regularly seeks the pupil's views on issues such as playtime arrangements and the purchase of new play equipment. They are adamant their views are taken seriously and are proud that they make a difference. Pupils thoroughly enjoy and appreciate the clubs and activities the school offers. Behaviour is excellent and they show great respect for the interests and feelings of all those at the school. Pupils' have an exceptionally well-developed understanding of how to stay safe and they all have a trusted adult they can turn to for help and advice. This is excellent preparation for future life and learning and beyond that normally expected for their age group.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good achievement of pupils reflects the good quality of teaching and learning at the school. Teachers have high expectations and know their pupils very well. Thoroughly planned lessons take good account of pupils' previous learning so that those who need extra help or harder work receive it. Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants work well as a team to make learning challenging and fun. The regular and effective use of talking partners develops pupils' confidence, self-esteem and understanding. However, there are missed opportunities in some lessons for pupils to explore their own ideas by working independently and using their initiative. Pupils themselves say they would like more time to work in this way because it is fun to find out about things and learn to do it on your own.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is of good quality and is constantly evolving. It meets the basic academic needs of pupils well, as well as supporting their social and personal development extremely well through initiatives to encourage healthy living and staying safe. The school is increasing the opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes in subjects other than English. This is already having a positive impact on pupils' attainment in writing. The school provides outstanding enrichment opportunities through a wide range of visits and specialist visitors including African dancers and artists in residence. Teachers are building well on the good start at using ICT skills to support learning across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are looking forward eagerly to making even more use of these skills to support their work during lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are cared for extremely well and parents trust the school with their safekeeping. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that there is always someone to 'comfort' and care for them if they have any concerns or problems. Vulnerable pupils receive highly effective support and very good links with outside agencies provide additional support and guidance. The school takes the health, safety and protection of children very seriously and comprehensive measures are in place to ensure child protection. Academic guidance and support is of a high standard. Pupils' progress is accurately tracked and used to target help where it is most needed. Older pupils are particularly skilled at discussing their learning and using their targets to improve their work. The marking of pupils work is of a very good quality and gives them a very clear idea of what they have achieved and how they might improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Excellent leadership by the headteacher and her deputy has enabled the school to make significant improvements since the last inspection. This is an important factor behind the school's success. Adults at all levels are now working hard to fulfil the detailed programme of continuous improvement based upon very challenging targets.

Extremely accurate self-evaluation underpins these initiatives. Subject coordinators are working well in partnership to evaluate the school's performance and make improvements. Less experienced leaders are receiving good quality support to increase their impact on the quality of learning as well as the rate at which pupils make progress. Governors carefully monitor the work of the school and are very good at holding it to account for its performance.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

23 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Polehampton Church of England Infant School, Reading, RG10 9HS

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you about your school and looking at your work. I am writing to tell you what we think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

We were very much impressed with your friendliness and your extremely sensible and helpful attitudes towards each other. You listen very carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons. Teaching and learning are good and you are all making good progress. As you say, your teachers make learning interesting and fun and there are many exciting things to do such as dancing, painting, weaving, gardening and taking part in 'fit and funky'.

You go to a good school that prepares you well for the next stage of your learning. One of the hardest jobs when a school is good is to make sure that it keeps on getting better. It's like when you first learn to ride your bicycle without stabilizers. You have to keep practicing so that you can get better and better.

I know that you will continue to help your teachers make your school even better by always doing your very best at all times. Your teachers are going to help by giving you even more opportunities to explore your own ideas and use your initiative so that you can continue to make rapid progress. You told us that you enjoy learning this way because it is exciting and fun.

We are sure you will continue to listen to what your teachers have to say and work hard to meet the targets set for you. We hope that you have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Earish

Lead Inspector