

Redditch, The Vaynor First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116727
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312381
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Mankelow

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	K Lumley
Headteacher	S Foster-Agg
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Tennyson Road Headless Cross Redditch B97 5BL
Telephone number	01527 543187
Fax number	01527 543187

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average first school. Most pupils live locally and are from White British backgrounds. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year but is typically at the level expected. The headteacher was appointed in April 2005 and the deputy headteacher in September 2006. There has been a very high turnover in teaching staff recently. Nearly half of the teachers joined the school in September 2007. The school has a number of national awards, including the Activemark, Healthy School Award and International School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Good leadership has led to improvement in the quality of teaching and, consequently, pupils' progress. Senior leaders have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have taken effective action to move the school forward. However, many of the actions were only fully implemented in September 2007 owing to staffing issues and, although there are clear improvements, they are too recent to have had a full impact on raising achievement for all pupils. Most parents are very supportive of the school. One typically commented, 'Under the headteacher's leadership the school has improved, with new teachers coming in with good ideas.' A few parents expressed concern about the turbulence in staffing but the school is doing all that it can to minimise the effects of this.

Children settle happily into the Reception classes because staff look after them well. This good pastoral care continues throughout the school and results in pupils' good personal development, attendance and well-being, which is reflected in their sheer enjoyment of school. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school and behaviour is good. Overall achievement is now satisfactory and improving. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 4, standards are broadly at the level expected for their age. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory but there is much that is good, which is enabling pupils' progress to quicken. Where teaching is less than good it is because lessons lack pace and are not sufficiently interesting, or explanations are unclear or work is not well matched to pupils' prior attainment. In these lessons progress, though satisfactory, is not as good as it should be if previous lost ground is to be made up. In some classes pupils are given good opportunities to assess their own progress and to check on ways to improve, but practice is inconsistent so opportunities to assist pupils making better progress are sometimes missed.

The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good features, notably the 'wow' lessons that are used to introduce each topic. For example, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the work that they did when their classrooms were transformed into a reception centre for victims of an earthquake. This led to some effective collaborative work in planning what to do when the displaced/homeless people arrived.

Senior leaders have introduced a robust system for tracking pupils' progress but this is not as effective as it could be because in a minority of classes, teachers' assessments of pupils' work have been inaccurate. Senior leaders have recognised this and there are plans for assessments to be closely checked and moderated where required. The school has begun to set challenging targets for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, and these have contributed to improved standards. Pupils are set individual, short-term targets linked to curriculum levels. However, in some classes pupils are not sufficiently involved in this process so do not have a clear understanding of the level they are on or how to move to the next level.

The school's governors provide good support and increasing challenge. Good improvements since the last inspection in attendance, behaviour and provision in the Foundation Stage, along with the more recent improvements in teaching and progress show that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Reception classes is better than at the time of the last inspection. It is now satisfactory, with some good features. Teaching is mostly good but this improvement is recent so, whilst progress is improving in lessons, achievement overall is currently satisfactory. Children enter Year 1 with average skills except in calculation, where they are below average. Skilful planning ensures that all areas of learning are well covered, with a useful emphasis placed on numeracy. Regular assessments are used well to identify where further work is needed. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities, which are thoroughly enjoyed. For example, children effectively developed their communication skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world whilst undertaking their 'wellie walk'. They followed instructions to find the dragon's treasure, the treasure being fortune cookies, linking well with work on the Chinese New Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all teaching is good or better by ensuring that all lessons are interesting and move at a brisk pace, and that explanations are always clear and are well matched to pupils' prior learning.
- Ensure that individual pupils' targets are used consistently in all classes to help pupils know clearly what they need to do next in order to improve.
- Ensure that all teachers assess pupils' work accurately.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were broadly average in reading and writing but significantly below average in mathematics. Standards in the current Year 2 are on course to be a little above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. Standards in Year 4 in 2007 were in line with those expected for pupils aged nine in all three subjects. Current Year 4 pupils are on course to reach standards that are just above those expected for their age. Lower standards in mathematics in Year 2 are related to weak calculation skills when children enter Reception. By Year 4, the school's focus on mathematics has had time to raise standards in the subject to be in line with those in reading and writing. The standards reached in 2007 were not high enough compared with pupils' starting points. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching have resulted in better progress in all years and achievement being at least satisfactory for all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants in class and in small withdrawal groups. The school also makes good use of outside agencies to support these pupils. As a result, they generally make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because they are well cared for. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Pupils' good manners and behaviour

contribute much to the school's calm and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils say that they feel safe because, as one put it, 'the teachers are all kind and you feel safe with them'. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, particularly about the need for a balanced diet. One explained, 'You can eat a few sweets so long as you have lots of fruit and vegetables as well.' Pupils' contributions to the school and wider community are satisfactory. Class council members take their responsibilities seriously and the school plans to extend this to form a whole-school council, thus giving pupils wider involvement in decision making that affects their community. Some pupils have recently become 'peer mentors' and have responsibility for leading games and activities at lunchtimes. This makes a positive contribution to playtime being calm and everyone feeling involved. Pupils are given many opportunities to work in pairs and teams, which contributes well to their social development. Preparation for the next stage of education is satisfactory because pupils' basic skills are broadly in line with those expected.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching overall is satisfactory, with many good features that are supporting pupils' quickening progress. There has been positive impact from the work of senior leaders that is supporting the improving picture in teaching quality. There are good relationships in all classes and effective procedures for rewarding good behaviour and good work. These contribute well to pupils' personal development and their growing independence. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but the quality of marking is inconsistent between classes and does not always make it clear what pupils need to do next in order to improve. Similarly, teachers make regular formal assessments of pupils' reading, writing and mathematics but, in a few classes, the assessments are not accurate so pupils are not always set work that is well matched to their prior attainment. Occasionally, explanations are not sufficiently clear and this slows the pace of some pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has developed 'the Vaynor international curriculum' which ensures that statutory requirements are met, effectively links subjects together and gives an international perspective to work where appropriate. This widens pupils' enjoyment in learning and makes a significant contribution to their appreciation and understanding of different cultures. The school's provision for personal, social and health education makes a very effective contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. There are many well-attended after-school sports clubs which make an effective contribution to pupils' good healthy lifestyles. Visits to places of interest and visitors to school are used satisfactorily to stimulate pupils' interests. Provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. Interactive whiteboards are used well in most classes to ensure that pupils are well engaged with their work and learn successfully. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities work from an adapted tailor-made curriculum that assists their good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents greatly appreciate the good pastoral care that all adults in the school provide. A typical comment is, 'The staff are always warm and very approachable.' Safeguarding procedures are robust and regularly reviewed. A higher-level teaching assistant provides support in small groups for pupils with social and emotional needs. This is especially effective in helping those pupils to take a full part in the life of the school. Teachers from the middle school work regularly in the school and this contributes significantly to pupils' successful transfer at the end of Year 4. Academic guidance, though satisfactory overall, is better in some classes than others. Whilst in some classes pupils have a clear knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to move up to the next level of work, this is developing but is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong and well-focused leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has led to significant, sustainable improvements in the school, albeit that some are quite recent. Their rigorous monitoring of teaching, with good support from the local authority, has resulted in teaching being raised to a satisfactory level of quality, and frequently better than this. Stringent monitoring of pupils' progress by the senior leaders ensures that most of those at risk of underachieving are identified early and targeted with effective intervention strategies to help them catch up. The headteacher rightly holds teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class. Previous inaccuracies in assessment have been identified, with rigorous moderation now supporting a sharper focus on the achievement of individuals and overall quicker pace to school improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are becoming increasingly effective in their work to hold the school to account because they are given detailed, accurate information by the headteacher. Governors recognise the need to visit more regularly to monitor at first hand and have recently developed procedures for doing so.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Vaynor First School, Redditch B97 5BL

You may remember that I visited your school at the end of January with two other inspectors. Thank you very much for making us so welcome and telling us all about your school. I am writing now to tell you what we found.

Yours is a satisfactory school that is getting better because your headteacher is determined that you should all do as well as you can. The staff look after you well so most of you like coming to school. We were impressed with how you use your class 'zone boards' to show that you are working hard and behaving well. Your school helps you to lead healthy lifestyles because many of you take a lot of exercise at the sports clubs that are provided. You make sound progress and by the time you go to middle school you reach the standards that are expected of you. Overall, we have said that the quality of teaching is satisfactory, and some is better than this. The best lessons are really interesting and fast-moving. In these lessons everything is made clear to you and the work is not too hard or too easy.

- There are three things that we have asked your school to do to continue to improve.
- All of the teaching needs to be as good as the best or better.
- You should all be told exactly what your targets mean so that you know how to make your work better.
- All of the teachers should make sure that they check your work accurately.

You can help your teachers a lot by continuing to work hard and behave well. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Mankelow Lead inspector

Annex B

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David Mankelow
Lead inspector