

Pitsford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121850
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380337
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2012
Lead inspector	Geof Timms

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 of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shane Atherton
Headteacher	Jane Cartlidge
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Geof Timms

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven lessons, taught by four teachers. Four hours of teaching were observed. Meetings were held with staff, parents and carers, pupils and members of the governing body. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. He observed the school's work, and looked at a range of policies, planning documents and the school's self-evaluation. Thirty-one questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller-than-average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of pupils are White British with a very small proportion from Asian backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is average, but very high in some year groups. The majority of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties or specific learning difficulties. The small numbers mean that classes have mixed-age groups and this organisation has to vary from year to year. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for just over one term. Current floor standards (national minimum standards) are met.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Pupils are very well behaved and this has a positive impact on their learning.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress given their variable starting points and, overall, reach above-average standards by the time they leave the school.
- Current progress in reading and writing is more inconsistent, especially through Key Stage 2, and last year insufficient pupils made the expected progress to match the national average. Even so, the teaching of reading has improved because teachers' skills in helping pupils link sounds and letters are good.
- Progress in mathematics is better than that found nationally and there are examples of outstanding work in art and design and creative writing.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with good aspects where lessons are lively and pupils actively involved. Where the teaching remains satisfactory the pace is slower, lessons are too teacher-led and pupils are passive and not fully involved or challenged by the tasks.
- The headteacher is providing the school with good, challenging and ambitious leadership, through accurate and honest self-evaluation. The recent introduction of an efficient system for tracking pupils' progress is providing useful information but teachers do not yet use this effectively enough to highlight and address pupils who are slipping behind.
- Safeguarding requirements are met and parents, carers and pupils are clear that all are safe in school.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress of pupils in reading and writing so that all make at least two National Curriculum levels progress through Key Stage 2 by summer 2013.

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- Ensure more of the teaching is consistently good by:
 - improving the pace of lessons and providing activities that are practical, active and give pupils more opportunities to solve problems
 - ensuring lessons are sufficiently challenging for all abilities.
- Embed recent improvements to the tracking of pupils' progress and ensure all staff, including middle leaders, are aware of, and accountable for, achievement so that they are able to tackle any underachievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall. This supports the picture evident from the results of national tests. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any groups of pupils over time. Achievement was good where the teaching was lively and paced, and provided sufficient challenge. This was most consistently evident in Years 5 and 6. Achievement varies from year to year, but the evidence in pupils' books supports a picture of at least satisfactory and at times good progress in reading, writing, mathematics – and in other subjects. Attainment in reading and writing is currently broadly average, while in mathematics it is slightly above average. There are examples of outstanding skills in art and design. These are evident in some water-colour paintings of flowers in the style of O'Keefe. Older pupils demonstrate excellent writing skills when they are given the opportunity. For example, there is some very imaginative and mature descriptive writing about the night, that demonstrates an excellent understanding of personification.

Most children start in the Reception class with the social and emotional skills generally expected for their age and a good attitude towards learning. They have a much less well-developed understanding of aspects of mathematics, especially shape, space and measure, of creative and physical development, and of knowledge and understanding of the world. They make satisfactory progress through the Reception Year, although the limitations of the current accommodation make providing a fully appropriate Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum barely manageable. The evidence from lessons and from pupils' books is that progress throughout the school has improved. Even so, the data and inspection evidence show too many pupils not yet making the expected progress in all classes and too few reaching the higher levels. This is the result of earlier teaching that has lacked challenge and enough active involvement of the learners. Achievement in mathematics has improved due to better use of practical and problem solving activities.

Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are tracked as individuals, and make at least satisfactory progress given their starting points. Good,

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new, individual education plans are providing them with clearer and more easily understood targets and this helps them better understand what they need to do to improve. In small groups, pupils make good progress especially in their speech, language and communication work, which has a high focus in their learning. There are no other significant differences between groups and the school monitors the progress of all pupils.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall and this is reflected in the satisfactory progress made by most pupils. Where the teaching is no better than satisfactory, it is because pupils are not given enough opportunities to solve problems or to take part in more practical, active learning. The pace of lessons is sometimes too slow. For example, in one lesson the teacher's introduction was much too long and pupils were not sufficiently involved in their learning. The strongest teaching demonstrates a good level of challenge to all learners and some outstanding aspects. This is mainly evident when pupils are fully and actively involved in lessons. In the best lessons, tasks are set that require cooperation and collaboration rather than individual work. For example, in one lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils discussed and compared arguments for building on a local country park. The open nature of this task extended their thinking and promoted discussion and argument. In addition, the work followed up a visit to the site of the park. This brought home the reality of the task and made it more relevant and interesting to the pupils. Their good behaviour and the very strong relationships between teachers and pupils are positive, but at times pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long before being provided with activities.

Teaching assistants provide good support to teachers when they are fully deployed, whether with groups of different abilities, individual one-to-one teaching, or with a small year group for a separate activity, such as outdoors with the Early Years Foundation Stage. At times, the best use of their time is not made, such as during overly long whole-class introductory sessions. Teaching has a good impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many lessons have a strong moral aspect and, as when considering local nature reserves, a spiritual element. Art, design and music are used to extend pupils' cultural development. Teachers work hard to plan a broad and balanced curriculum. This is made more difficult by the regular changes to the mixed-age arrangements in different classes as the numbers vary year on year. Even so the curriculum has a satisfactory impact on pupils' learning and the school has plans to develop this further.

Although the inspection evidence points to some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, parents and carers are happy that the teaching is effective and that their children are learning and making progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupils' behaviour is a major strength of the school. In lessons, and outside or around the school, the pupils are consistently well behaved and polite towards each other and adults. They cooperate and collaborate well in lessons when given the

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opportunity. A small minority of parents have minor concerns about behaviour, but the general picture, from both parental views and from inspection evidence, is of consistently good behaviour over time. A small number of minor bullying incidents raised by parents have been fully recorded and dealt with by the school. Attendance is currently above average and this reflects the success of a lot of hard work by the school to address some persistent absence and too many parents and carers taking their children on holiday in term time.

Although a small number of pupils criticise others' behaviour, they say they feel safe in school and they demonstrate this in their day-to-day work and play. The children in Reception are well cared for and provided with a safe and interesting outdoor area which is due to have a new all-weather surface in the near future. However, adults do not always reinforce the need for children to wash their hands before having their snack, missing the opportunity to teach about staying safe and healthy.

Leadership and management

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is providing good, firm leadership at an important time as the school looks to build on its previous strengths, and to address some past inconsistencies in achievement. She, together with the staff, has worked hard to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and to produce an effective development plan that will support further improvement. The priorities raised are the correct ones that are likely to have a major impact on pupils' learning and ensure all staff are more accountable for achievement and progress. The improved quantity and quality of data showing individual pupils' progress have highlighted the priority of making progress consistent throughout the school. These data have also proved useful in developing the governing body's understanding of the school's success and areas requiring improvement. Governors support the school well and are developing their ability to hold the school to account through this improved understanding of performance. The data are not used fully or regularly enough to hold teachers to account for all pupils' progress.

The changes to senior leadership, alongside other staff changes, mean that subject leadership is not yet strong enough to ensure consistently good progress. Safeguarding requirements are met and the school works hard to ensure pupils' safety. This is reflected in pupils' comments, and those of parents and carers which are very positive about how safe they feel their children are at school.

The school's track record showing aspects of good, although inconsistent, achievement and the clear sense of purpose to ensure more consistency in teaching indicate a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Pupils' good behaviour has been sustained. The drive for improvement is evident in the recent changes to the collection and recording of progress data, and in the way these are increasingly used to promote accountability. Teachers' skills are regularly improved through professional development and further training. This has proved successful recently, for example, with the good work now evident in linking sounds and letters.

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The curriculum covers all expected aspects and is used satisfactorily to provide for the mixed-age classes, which alter year on year. The provision generally meets pupils' needs and helps promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily, although some lessons lack sufficient challenge to ensure that every pupil makes consistently good progress. There is no discrimination and relationships are positive throughout the school community.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pitsford Primary School, Northampton, NN6 9AU

Thank you for the way you welcomed me to your school recently. I really enjoyed my visit and talking with many of you about your school. I especially enjoyed seeing your good behaviour and how much better is your regular attendance at school. You clearly enjoy your learning. I also enjoyed meeting Toast, your rescue hamster.

You clearly enjoy your time at the school, although the progress you make has not always been as good as it could be. For example, you make good progress in mathematics but less good progress in reading and writing. However, learning about letters and sounds is improving and those of you who find learning more difficult are being well supported by the staff. Your school is good at teaching you about appreciating nature and a variety of art, music and how others live.

I have asked your school to do three things to help you make even better progress in the future. These include ensuring you make enough progress in reading and writing especially through Key Stage 2. I have asked teachers to make more lessons lively and active, and to ensure you have enough opportunities to solve problems. You told me you like work that really challenges you and I have asked teachers to make sure you are sometimes given more difficult tasks. Finally, I have asked the school to make better use of their assessment of your progress to check on how well you are learning and to see that anyone falling behind gets the help needed.

You can help by continuing to be so well behaved and attending school regularly. Thank you again for your friendliness and help. I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Pitsford and keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms
Lead inspector

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