

# Pulford C of E VA Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109619
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337335
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November 2010–1 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steven Hill

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kevin Pughe
<b>Headteacher</b>	David J Heather
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Pulford Road Leighton Buzzard LU7 1AB
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed, taught by five teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and a variety of documentation, particularly that related to pupils' progress, and safeguarding procedures. They scrutinised examples of pupils' work, and analysed questionnaires returned by Key Stage 2 pupils, staff and 91 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Do pupils continue to make good progress across the school after their above average results at Key Stage 1, and are girls and boys making equally good progress?
- Is the school right to judge behaviour, and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as being outstanding?
- To what extent has provision improved since the last inspection, particularly in challenging higher attainers, making good links between subjects, and in supporting pupils potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances?

## Information about the school

This is a small primary school near the centre of a small town. The large majority of pupils are White British, with a few coming from a wide range of different minority ethnic heritages. Almost all pupils speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A new headteacher and deputy have been appointed since the last inspection. The school has also established a before- and after-school club, Little Saints, since the last inspection.

**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: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Excellent work by the school's leaders, particularly in managing teaching and learning, has driven improvements extremely well since the last inspection and particularly over the last year. The school's many existing strengths have been built upon very well. As a result, it now provides an outstanding education. Pupils make excellent progress and attain high standards because of outstanding teaching. They thoroughly enjoy both social and academic aspects of school, and their behaviour is excellent. A varied and exciting curriculum promotes both their achievement and their enjoyment of learning.

A key to the improvements in progress over the last two years is the way the leaders have improved assessment systems and their use to inform planning. This means that teachers are much clearer about exactly how well pupils are progressing, and match work much more closely to their different needs. The school is quickly able to identify if any individual pupils are in danger of falling behind, and staff respond swiftly to help by planning interventions that meet their particular needs. The work of all subject leaders has made a strong contribution to these developments. However, subject leaders have not had much opportunity to share expertise with colleagues by working alongside them in the classroom. The headteacher has identified this as a priority, and plans are being drawn up to address it.

The school's strong academic success is matched by pupils' outstanding personal development. This results from excellent care, guidance and support. The school is a thriving and extremely cohesive community, where boys and girls from different backgrounds play and work together very well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They consider moral issues thoughtfully, and are very respectful of other's opinions and beliefs. They form very positive relationships with other pupils and with staff, and are extremely caring about each other. They have exceptionally good collaborative skills. The school has worked hard and successfully to extend pupils' understanding of the wider world, and of different cultures, through a wide-ranging curriculum. There is a strong link with a community in Kenya, and visitors from a range of backgrounds enhance pupils' understanding. However, pupils' opportunities to link directly with contrasting communities in this country are limited.

Pupils feel happy and safe in school because they have confidence that the staff will look after and care for them. There are some very good practical systems in place to ensure pupils' safety, such as the extremely thorough checks made on adults' suitability to work with children, and all statutory requirements are met. However, the paperwork to back this up is of very variable quality, and some policies lack detail and are not sufficiently tailored to this particular school.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and has been used very effectively to make major improvements over the last eighteen months. Staff work as a cohesive team and are keen

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to build further on their success. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the policies to support safeguarding better by:
  - tailoring them more specifically to this school, before May 2011
  - providing better detail, so that each is a more useful, stand-alone resource for staff, also before May 2011
  - by the end of January 2011, ensuring that the child protection policy incorporates all the detail that is currently provided in separate documents.
- Implement the plans for teachers to share expertise by giving them more opportunities to work alongside each other in the classroom.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about and interact with people from contrasting communities in the United Kingdom.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range but overall is somewhat above that expected nationally. Achievement is outstanding and in class, learning is at least good and in many lessons it is outstanding. All pupils now make similarly strong progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because these pupils receive different work when required, that is carefully matched to their specific needs, as well as support from skilled teaching assistants. The small number of pupils of minority ethnic heritage, including those who speak English as an additional language, make the same excellent progress as their classmates. By the end of Year 4, attainment is high, and it is well-above the local authority average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils in Year 4 made excellent progress in their understanding of the style of newspaper reports when they studied topical examples. They were fully involved throughout the lesson, and used their exceptionally good collaborative skills to share ideas, resulting in high quality writing of their own in this genre. Pupils in Year 1 made excellent progress in their social skills, and good progress in aspects of science, mathematics and English, in a session when they decided for themselves the order in which they would tackle a range of activities.

A gap in progress between boys and girls in the past has been resolved effectively, and boys and girls now make the same progress in lessons. The results at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage for the last two years show that boys and girls now enter Key Stage 1 with similarly high standards. Boys who had made less progress in the past are catching up fast'

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their high attendance. Their behaviour is excellent in class, and around the school they are sensible and thoughtful. Even when playing energetically, pupils are very considerate towards each other. They contribute extremely well to the wider community through their involvement in many events locally. They take a pride in the help they have provided to their friends in Kenya, by raising money to support an individual child's schooling and to improve water supplies. In school,

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they happily take on a wide range of responsibilities, for instance, as school or eco councillors, and perform them conscientiously. Pupils show real concern for each other, both formally as 'playground friends', and informally when they see a need, such as helping a classmate who seems hurt or worried.

Pupils work very hard and take a pride in their achievement. They have an excellent understanding of health issues, such as the importance of a balanced diet and hygiene, and are very enthusiastic about exercise, as Year 3 showed when they participated very energetically in a dance lesson. They have strong basic skills, including very good skills in using information and communication technology. Along with their exemplary attitudes to learning and their excellent social skills, these prepare them extremely well for their future lives in school and beyond.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

**How effective is the provision?**

High quality teaching and learning are based on very positive relationships, and high expectations of both work and behaviour. Pupils try hard and successfully to meet these, and are very motivated by the positive feedback they get for their success. Teachers and other adults monitor progress extremely well during lessons, intervening very effectively to provide help where needed, but also challenging pupils to refine their work and take it to the next level. Increasingly, this is extended when pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own success, and to make thoughtful suggestions to help each other improve their work.

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Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to clarify explanations and to engage pupils' interest. Extremely good strategies are used to involve all pupils in lessons, such as pupils writing their answers or ideas on small whiteboards. The extensive use of discussion not only develops speaking, listening and social skills extremely well, but also helps pupils to sort out their ideas before they start on tasks. This helps them to produce work of high quality. Very good use is made of the large number of skilled teaching assistants to provide extra help or challenge to groups or individuals who need it.

The curriculum provides pupils with an extensive range of interesting activities that strongly motivate them to learn. It is modified effectively to closely meet pupils' different abilities and needs. A wide range of visits and visitors, and particular themed events such as the 'Victorian day', contribute to both enjoyment and learning. Some excellent teaching of French in Key Stage 2 gets pupils off to a flying start in learning a modern language, and engenders great enjoyment. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that are very popular. Pupils have excellent opportunities to start learning a musical instrument. Consistently good links are made between different subjects, which make learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

The pastoral care provided for pupils is of a high quality, and underpins their excellent personal skills. Teachers and other staff consistently reinforce positive values in lessons and in everyday conversations around the school. This successfully encourages pupils to show concern and consideration for each other, as do assemblies which have a strong moral theme rooted in the school's Christian ethos. The schools excellent understanding of individuals' personal needs ensures that everyone is fully included in school life. Great care is taken to make sure that any pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable get a high level of personal support, tailored to their specific needs, making very good use of a range of external agencies when needed. The Little Saints club also makes a good contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and other leaders provide very clear educational direction to the school. They have evolved systems that have enabled staff to work as an excellent team. Together, they have improved teaching and learning, particularly through much better use of assessment, and improved progress so that it is now outstanding. The governing body plays a good part in driving improvements and contributing to the school's strategic direction. It has a good overview of strengths and weaknesses that enable it to hold the school to account.

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There are excellent systems that ensure parents and carers are involved in the life of the school and in their children's learning. They are consulted regularly about aspects of school life and their views have a strong impact on decision making. Good links with other partners, such as the local upper-school or medical and social agencies, contribute well to pupils' learning and well-being. The school has done an excellent job in ensuring that there is no discrimination in the school through its outstanding promotion of positive values and respect, and by responding to individual needs to ensure all are fully included in school life. Good progress has been made on closing the gap between boys' and girls' standards. Although this is not complete, the school is already taking effective action to overcome differences in achievement that arose in the past.

Safeguarding has a number of strengths, and all teachers have had good training to ensure that they are up-to-date with the most recent guidance. The curriculum makes strong contributions to pupils' understanding of how to stay safe. However, there are weaknesses in some paperwork so that it does not reflect the school's good day-to-day practice. The promotion of community cohesion is excellent within the school and very strong in relation to the local community. There are very good, established links abroad, but the links with different communities in the United Kingdom are limited.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Excellent teaching and an outstanding curriculum support children's excellent progress. By the time children go on to Year 1, boys and girls have attained standards that exceed national averages in all aspects of their learning. Very good links with parents support children's smooth induction into school life. There are very positive relationships between adults and the children, so they feel safe and secure in the setting and learn confidently. Behaviour is excellent and children get on very well together, sharing equipment sensibly.



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A brisk pace ensures children's full involvement in a wide range of interesting practical activities both indoors and out. Children were completely absorbed in playing in the indoor 'forest,' for example. Outdoors, children were fascinated when the teacher showed them how to make artificial snow. Excellent questioning ensured that they made very good progress in their knowledge and understanding, and they thoroughly enjoyed talking about what they had observed. A good balance is kept between activities directed by adults and those which children select for themselves. Adults are particularly skilled at monitoring and joining in children's play, encouraging them to extend their ideas, and developing their understanding and vocabulary extremely well. Very good ongoing assessments of children are made which not only provide a clear picture of progress, but enable staff to match subsequent activities closely to their needs.

The setting is led and managed very effectively to maximise the use of the many extra adults who sometimes are available. Students, parents and other volunteers all contribute and examples of all three working effectively to support learning were seen during the inspection.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The rate of return to the questionnaire for parents and carers was high, and showed that they are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly value that their children are safe and happy in school, and praise the quality of teaching, and of leadership and management.

A very small number of parents and carers have some concerns about how the school responds to their suggestions and concerns. The inspection evidence indicated that the school frequently seeks parents' and carers' views and takes due account of them in making decisions. Examples were also found of where the school has responded very well to the concerns of individuals, and some letters from parents commented positively about this.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pulford CofE VA Lower School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	76	21	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	82	16	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	56	38	42	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	66	30	33	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	65	31	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	71	24	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	56	40	44	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	49	54	36	40	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	60	35	38	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	46	43	47	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	47	40	44	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	66	31	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	75	23	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.

**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.**



2 December 2010

Dear Pupils,

**Inspection of Pulford C of E VA Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 1AB**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome and all your help during the inspection. You told us that you enjoy school and that you all get on well together.

We found that your school is outstanding. You reach high standards because your teachers are very good at helping you to learn. I was particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour, your hard work, and by how well you all work together in teams. It was especially good to see how kind you are to each other. You have lots of exciting things to do and you especially enjoy trips out and all the clubs that the school provides. The adults are very good at keeping an eye on how well everyone is doing and they make sure that if anyone needs any extra help, they get it. The school is extremely well organised, and the adults have made a lot of improvements since the last inspection. They are keen to carry on getting better, and we have agreed three things that they will concentrate on to do this.

The adults are very careful to keep everyone safe, and they are going to improve the paperwork that they keep, to help them do this even better.

The teachers are going to spend more time working together in each other's classes, so they can share good ideas and help each other to make your lessons even more interesting.

You have learned a lot about different people around the world, and I know you are very interested in the community you are in touch with in Kenya. The school is going to arrange more opportunities for you to learn about, and perhaps meet, people from different communities in this country.

You can help by keeping up your hard work and excellent behaviour. I hope that you carry on enjoying life at Pulford.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill

Lead inspector

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