

Polebrook Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121987
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359140
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	David Rzeknik HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Edwards
Headteacher	Hazel Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector who inspected for half a day. Inspectors observed six lessons or part lessons and three teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair of Governors and a group of pupils, including representatives of the school council. No formal meetings were held with parents and carers. Inspectors looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan and safeguarding procedures. They also scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated the responses from 38 parental and carers' questionnaires and the outcomes from staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- How successful are the measures adopted to raise standards in mathematics and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4?
- How well are research, enquiry, problem-solving and investigative skills being taught across the curriculum and what is the impact of the distance-learning materials provided to circus children and their families?
- What is the quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and subject leaders, particularly in mathematics, writing and science and its impact?

Information about the school

The school is small for its type. Pupils move on to middle school at the end of Year 4. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although the number in each year group varies. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A very few circus children attend the school for part of the year. None were attending the school at the time of the inspection. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year. Most of the teaching staff have changed since the last inspection. The school has gained a Healthy Schools award and has Artsmark Silver accreditation. The school runs a breakfast club, for half an hour before school starts, five days a week.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils make good progress because teaching is effective and the curriculum is well organised, imaginative and meets pupils' needs and interests very well. The last inspection judged that there was not enough enquiry, problem-solving or investigative work. This weakness has been successfully remedied. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to undertake research and to find things out for themselves. For example, pupils use the internet to explore the habitats of animals and the different kinds of camouflage these creatures use to conceal themselves. Pupils' mental calculation and thinking skills are not as good as they could be. Teachers are starting to rectify the problem, but lesson observations reveal that many pupils still have difficulty thinking things out 'in their heads' and have too few strategies to solve problems. Teachers are good at sharing lesson objectives at the start of lessons so pupils know what must be achieved. However, they are not routinely setting targets to inform pupils what must be improved. Pupils are insufficiently involved in setting their own targets for improvement. Lesson planning is good overall and teachers are making effective use of assessment information to ensure work is suitably matched to pupils' capabilities. This said, the planning for child-initiated activities in Reception is not sharp enough. All major aspects of provision in the Reception class are good and strong partnerships have been established with parents and carers and support agencies.

In 2010, Year 2 standards rose dramatically from average to well above average.

The improvement was brought about by consistently good teaching, an effective creative curriculum and well-targeted extra help. Pupils are happy, safe and secure and they behave well. They enjoy school as demonstrated by their regular attendance. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. For example, last year they produced, marketed and sold a compact disc about rainforest regeneration to raise funds to protect these areas.

Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles extremely well. They are very keen to take up sports activities with other schools because they know this will improve their fitness and health.

A Christian ethos pervades school life and very good links have been established with the local church. Provision has a very positive impact on pupils' spiritual and emotional development. Links with parents and carers are very good and they hold the school in high regard. Pupils are well cared for. Childcare arrangements in the breakfast club are satisfactory.

The headteacher has done a lot in her first year and has provided very good leadership. She has worked closely with the governing body and staff to drive and secure improvement. This has not been easy because there has been staffing disruption, which

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has meant she has had to teach quite a lot and take on additional responsibilities when a senior member of staff was absent. Nevertheless, she has overseen a dramatic rise in Year 2 standards and maintained good teaching when confronted with barriers to improvement. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum in the last 12 months to boost pupils' creativity and enquiry skills. Pupils notice the difference and say learning is fun and interesting. These improvements demonstrate that the school is in a good position to improve further. Self-evaluation is good. It is fair and accurate and is based on an effective analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders are challenging themselves well and there is a strong sense of purpose to improve school outcomes. Because the school is small, each teacher holds multiple-subject responsibilities. Middle leaders are doing a good job, but a few are new to their responsibilities. They require support and further skills development to ensure that their monitoring of teaching, learning and progress is fully effective. The monitoring of pupils' attainment is secure. However, the tracking of the progress made by different groups is not robust enough.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - improving pupils' mental calculation and thinking skills and widen the range of strategies used by pupils to solve problems
 - ensuring teachers set targets, and pupils set targets for themselves, so that both know what must be achieved and improved
 - ensuring teaching assistants are deployed well and support and guide pupils' learning effectively at all times
 - improving the planning of child-initiated learning in Reception to identify more clearly the intended learning outcomes for activities chosen by the children. Share learning objectives with the children so that they know what must be achieved.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - improving the skills and expertise of middle leaders, particularly those new to their role, and ensure that they monitor teaching, learning and pupils' progress effectively to further raise standards
 - improving the tracking of pupils' progress to determine the progress made by different groups to inform further intervention.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment data must be treated with caution given the very small numbers of pupils being assessed at the end of Years 2 and 4. Fluctuations in pupils' performance are to be expected as cohorts may differ. Attainment on entry is generally above the expected level for children's age. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2010 was well above average, particularly in reading and writing. Attainment at the end of Year 4 was average but pupils made good progress over time. This was despite some staffing disruption, particularly in their last year in school. Pupils' achievement is good, including that of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Circus pupils make good gains in their learning when they are in school because they receive well-targeted extra help to meet their specific

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needs. In the Reception activities observed, children were learning to be independent, share, take turns and to control their behaviour well when working with adults and other children. In other lessons seen, pupils' creative and investigative skills were developing at a good rate because the curriculum is encouraging them to be inquisitive, use their imagination and to find things out for themselves rather than being reliant on adults for information. The school has focused on developing pupils' creative-writing skills, and the work is paying dividends. A scrutiny of writing reveals pupils use descriptive language and complex sentences effectively, and their ideas and use of language are developing well. One thing they are not learning to do is set targets for improvement.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and their keenness to give of their best are important ingredients in their success. The school council is making a difference by improving playground equipment and arranging parties that pupils will enjoy. Pupils' involvement with the police and residents to reduce traffic speed in the village is a very worthwhile safety initiative in which to be involved.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

Teaching is consistently good and is ensuring pupils make good gains in their learning. Good and imaginative use is made of resources, particularly whiteboard computer technology to introduce and teach concepts. For example, in a Year 3/4 lesson, very effective use was made of the electronic whiteboard to teach how a spreadsheet works. In

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a Year 1/2 lesson, computer technology was used well to introduce the concept of camouflage through good-quality imagery that captured the pupils' interest. Teachers use good questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding of concepts and to clarify learners' thinking. As a result, dialogue between teachers and pupils is of good quality. Good assessment procedures ensure work is generally well matched to pupils' capabilities. Inspectors saw teaching assistants supporting pupils well, but there were occasions when they were not deployed effectively.

Curriculum subjects are being suitably linked together into themes and topics to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. Pupils enjoy the increased emphasis on art and physical education and like the practical work that they do in these subjects. A greater emphasis on enquiry and research-based learning, particularly through science, mathematics and information and communication technology, is developing pupils' creativity and problem-solving skills effectively. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and pupils look forward to the biennial residential trip. Distance-learning packages are provided for circus families so that learning can continue when pupils are not in school. The responsibility for ensuring that work is done rests with the family. Email contact is regular so a check can be made on pupils' progress throughout the work set, and parents and carers are kept suitably abreast of what is happening in school.

Pastoral care is an important strength. The number of pupils attending the breakfast club is small. Pupils are supervised effectively but the activities they engage in lack stimulation and time is not always used productively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and governing body have vision and set ambitious targets for improvement. School aims are successfully met. Governors and staff work well together and morale is high. Good staff have been recruited and they are rapidly giving of their best. However, there is recognition that newcomers require support and guidance to fulfil their subject responsibilities effectively.

Leaders' monitoring of provision identified what was working well and what must be improved. For example, the headteacher identified a lack of creativity in the curriculum which has been rectified. Areas of strength have also been improved. For example, the reading scheme has been overhauled and guided reading activities are accelerating pupils' reading performance to new heights.

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Concerted action to promote equality of opportunity has resulted in a significant improvement in attainment, particularly in Year 2. The school has identified where further improvements can be made and has good strategies to tackle any variations in performance.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors ensure statutory requirements are met and they have made some difficult decisions to ensure the school lives within its means. Leaders are called to account for the school's outcomes. However, governors know that they do not monitor enough of the school's work through direct, first-hand observation. Therefore, they have drawn up a monitoring plan that is to be operational in the near future.

Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. The school knows its place in the local and wider community and has started to engage in activities, such as the 'Spirit of Polebrook' to increase community involvement in school life. Leaders are at the early stages of formally evaluating the quality and impact of its work.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Recruitment and staff vetting procedures are robust. All staff have been suitably trained to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and their parents and carers agree.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Reception Year achieve well in all areas of learning. Children settle quickly because induction arrangements are very good. They enjoy school and are thriving in this stimulating, well-equipped classroom. A good curriculum is provided indoors and outside and its practical nature meets children's needs effectively. Children are motivated and interested in the broad range of activities provided and take responsibility for choosing

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what they do in an eager and confident way. In their first term in school, children are showing good levels of independence, curiosity and concentration. A good balance is struck between adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Planning for adult-led activities is thorough. However, it is not always made sufficiently explicit what the learning outcomes are for child-initiated learning, so that objectives can be shared with the children. Relationships between children and adults are excellent and children's behaviour is managed very effectively. Leadership and management are good. Assessment and safeguarding procedures are thorough. Very good links are established locally with parents, carers and other early years' practitioners.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A good proportion of parents and carers' questionnaires were returned. Parents and carers are happy with the quality of education provided and judge the school is well led and managed. No particular aspect of school life caused concern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Polebrook Church of England Primary 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	53	18	47	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	55	17	45	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	58	16	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	50	16	42	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	61	13	34	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	61	12	32	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	63	13	34	1	3	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)	22	58	15	39	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	55	14	37	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	47	20	53	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	39	20	53	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	61	13	34	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	61	14	37	1	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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). 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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Polebrook Church of England Primary School, Peterborough, PE8 5LN

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming and for answering our questions so openly and honestly. A big thanks to those in Year 3/4 who completed a questionnaire. Inspectors judge that you go to a good school.

Inspectors like these things about your school.

You enjoy school, have very positive attitudes to learning and behave well.

You are making good progress because teaching is good.

You said that the curriculum is fun and you enjoy doing art, physical education and going on residential trips.

The youngest children have settled into school very quickly. They are happy and like school a lot.

You are well cared for and you say you feel safe and secure.

The headteacher and new staff have settled in very well and are doing a good job. Governors and staff are moving the school in the right direction.

The school must do two things to improve further.

We want your progress to move from good to outstanding by:

- getting you to think things out 'in your head' more and learn even more strategies to solve problems
- getting teachers to set you targets and for you to set targets for yourselves so you know what must be improved and what National Curriculum level you are working at
- ensuring teaching assistants support and guide your learning well at all times
- ensuring teachers are clear about what the youngest children are learning when they choose activities for themselves.

We have asked the headteacher and governors to make sure that teachers who are doing new jobs are helped to make a success of them. Also that your progress is regularly checked.

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik

Her Majesty's Inspector

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