

Pirehill First School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124164
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380821
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2012
Lead inspector	David Driscoll

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 of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Crookshank
Headteacher	Debbie Breeze
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2009
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Driscoll

Additional inspector

Michael Onyon

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed the teaching in 17 lessons, taught by seven teachers. Inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's records of children's progress, safeguarding documentation, behaviour records and results of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors analysed the responses of 115 parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire.

Information about the school

Pirehill First School is smaller than most primary schools. The number on roll has risen each year since the school was last inspected. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The rest of the school population is made up of small numbers of pupils from a range of different minority ethnic groups. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.

The school shares its site with Smarty's pre-school, which also provides breakfast club and after-school clubs. None of these are managed by the school's governing body so are subject to a separate 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils make consistently good progress in both their academic and personal development. Almost all pupils reach or exceed the standards expected for their age by the time they leave the school. It is not outstanding because the progress of the most able pupils is not quite as good as others.
- Pupils make good progress. Children join the Reception class with understanding, knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress in each year group and leave with attainment that is well above average.
- Pupils respond well to the school’s high expectations of behaviour. Children are taught good manners and positive behaviour in the Reception class, and these attributes are built upon as pupils move through the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils are taught well. There is a strong focus on teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers explain tasks and concepts exceptionally well. Pupils of middle ability often make rapid progress, but the tasks given to the most able are not always equally as challenging, and learning time is sometimes lost when tasks are not given quickly enough.
- The headteacher provides decisive leadership and is well supported by other managers and the governing body. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are good. Monitoring of teaching is thorough and the results are used well to improve its quality. The results of monitoring are not always compared with the analyses of data on pupils’ progress to draw up priorities for improvement. The school has excellent partnerships with parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about the education their children receive.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching and achievement of the most able pupils by ensuring they are:
 - always given suitably challenging tasks
 - able to begin tasks as soon as they know what to do.
- Ensure that the school's priorities for development are firmly rooted in the results of checks on teaching and the analyses of data on pupils' progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are justifiably very pleased with the progress their children make. Children make good progress in the Reception class. Almost all achieve the early learning goals and many exceed them, so their attainment is above average on starting Year 1. The good progress continues so that attainment is usually well above average in reading by the end of Year 2. Pupils leave the school with well above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4. High proportions of pupils reach the levels expected for their age and the proportion who exceed such levels is above average.

Pupils very much enjoyed reading in the lessons observed. They used their good understanding of the sounds that letters make that they learnt in the Reception and Year 1 classes to read new and difficult words. Teachers in Reception and Year 1 frequently linked such sounding out of words to help pupils learn to spell correctly. This approach has been very successful. Reading books are very well chosen to interest and engage pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils in Year 2, for example, searched for the meaning behind metaphors in a complex book about a magic pencil. They carefully pieced together different parts of the text to discuss the causes of events. Learning was equally as good in mathematics and other lessons. Pupils usually concentrated well on the tasks they were given, especially when they were allowed to experiment and work things out for themselves.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their targets are clear, detailed and cover a wide range of subjects and aspects of their personal development. The school's approach of withdrawing them from lessons to work on improving a specific target is very successful in helping them to learn. Pupils of middle ability who are not quite reaching the level expected for their age become a key focus for teachers. Their needs are exceptionally well met and they often make exceptional progress to ensure they catch up with their peers. Progress for the most able, who have already exceeded the levels expected for their age, is not as strong because the work they are given is not as well matched to their

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needs.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers were full of praise for the quality of teaching, and pupils said that this was a key factor in their enjoyment of school. Inspectors found these views to be entirely accurate. Pupils are always very clear about what they are to do because teachers explain tasks and concepts exceptionally well. In a lesson on fractions, for example, pupils were shown how to use the numerator and denominator to find out if two different fractions were equivalent. The examples chosen started off simply and became progressively harder, carefully building on what had gone before, until all could see the pattern in the method. Sometimes, the most able understand more quickly than others and their progress is slowed when they have to remain on the carpet listening to the teacher instead of returning to their tables to apply their newly learnt skills.

Teachers use the results of assessments well to match the tasks to most pupils' abilities. The work given to the majority is demanding, but pupils work hard and concentrate well to achieve success. Some of the most able pupils, who are quick to learn, sometimes mark time in lessons by, for example, practising a skill for too long rather than learning something new. Teaching assistants are especially effective with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They make good use of targets on individual education plans to match work to pupils' abilities and insist that pupils think for themselves. Work is marked frequently and regularly. Parents and carers appreciate the way this helps them to be well informed about their child's progress.

The curriculum is well planned to ensure that all pupils receive a good grounding in the basics, while also providing them with a well-rounded education. There are many opportunities for sport and music for example, where the school has an impressive record of achievement. Teachers regularly provide good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given time to reflect on the meaning of poems, for example, and have plenty of opportunities to collaborate with others.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils all confirm that good behaviour is the norm and that the school is a very safe place to learn. Teachers consistently reinforce good standards of behaviour. Most pupils behave consistently well in lessons, although some lose concentration if they are kept on the carpet for too long when they are keen to get on with their work. Pupils show respect for adults and form strong relationships with their teachers. They are polite and interested in the world around them. Pupils are quick to respond when given the opportunity to take responsibility in school.

Incidents of poor behaviour are exceedingly rare. There have been no exclusions or racist incidents, for example, in at least the past five years. Incidents of bullying are

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also rare and limited to name calling. They are never allowed to escalate to physical violence or any other form of bullying. One reason for the school's good record is the use of the class 'judge and jury' approach. If there is a dispute between pupils or some are not being nice to others, it is discussed in class. All pupils put forward their views about the rights and wrongs of the situation, and what the participants should have done to prevent it occurring and what they need to do now. This not only prevents incidents escalating, but also successfully promotes pupils' social and moral development. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, but do not always put this into practice, such as when they rush out to play.

Attendance is above average because pupils of all ages thoroughly enjoy coming to school. One parent commented that she no longer gets a kiss goodbye at the school gate because her child is so eager to get started in the morning.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's strong, insightful leadership has ensured that morale among staff is very high. All feel a valued part of the team, and all are working to improve the education provided. Strengths from the previous inspection have been maintained and the main areas for improvement have been addressed successfully, clearly demonstrating the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. The headteacher's skills are also being used to support improvement in other schools. Checks on teaching are highly detailed and identify clearly what has worked well and what could be improved further. The areas for improvement are successfully addressed through training or observing other teachers. Members of the governing body are well informed about the pupils' attainment and the progress of individuals. Pupils' progress is generally tracked well as they move through the school. However, the analyses are not always used alongside results of checks on teaching to link cause and effect. For example, lesson observations accurately point to some lack of challenge for the most able, and this is reflected in the analysis of their progress, but the link between the two has not been made sufficiently in order to identify it as a priority on the school development plan.

Engagement with parents is outstanding, with excellent communications. Very high proportions of parents and carers were very positive about all aspects of the school. They particularly commented on the high quality of care and how safe they felt the school is. Excellent attention is paid to safeguarding, which fully meets all requirements. The school's leaders also promote equality and tackle discrimination well. One remarkable example came during the football World Cup held in South Africa. Pupils had a telling example of the meaning and impact of apartheid when they were treated differently according to their eye colour. They were left with a lasting impression of the unfairness of discrimination. Such additions to the broad and balanced curriculum are what make it good. It not only promotes basic skills effectively but also supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Other examples include the strong links with an inner city school where pupils learn what it is like to live in circumstance completely different from their own.

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.



21 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pirehill First School, Stone, ST15 0AA

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. You, and your parents and carers, can be very proud of how well you behaved and your good manners. You are kind to each other and think carefully about the right and wrong ways to behave. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and we can see why. You go to a good school where you learn quickly and leave with standards that are better than we often see. You get on well with your teachers and have lots of friends.

Your teachers are good at making sure that most of you are given work that is hard, but that you can complete if you really concentrate. Some of you learn very quickly indeed and those of you who need extra help get good support from the teachers. Some of you find the work a bit easy at times, or are ready to start work instead of staying on the carpet at the start of lessons. We have asked your teachers to make sure you all have work that is just difficult enough and that you make a start on it as soon as you know what to do. You can help by telling them if you need harder work.

Your school is getting better and better all the time. Your headteacher is very good at checking the teaching to find out what works well and what needs improving. We have asked her, and the other people who lead the school, to compare these with your test results so that the school can improve even more quickly. Your headteacher has made the school a very happy place. Your parents and carers are very happy indeed and all the staff enjoy working at the school as much as you enjoying coming. Your attendance is above average. Well done and keep it up!

With all best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll
Lead inspector

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