

Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121492
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	359023
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Swallow

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Hill
Headteacher	Mrs S Moore
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2008
School address	Foston York North Yorkshire YO60 7QB
Telephone number	01653 618265
Fax number	01653 618265
Email address	admin@foston.n-yorks.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Royal Exchange Buildings
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited nine lessons and observed two teachers. The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. He observed the school's work and looked at the school's improvement plans, self-evaluation, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. The inspector examined questionnaires from 13 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

- The effectiveness with which the needs of all pupils are met in wide range mixed-age classes.
- The rates of progress made by all pupils across Years 1 to 6, given varying starting points and the very small numbers of pupils involved.
- The impact of the confederation arrangements on the quality of teaching and learning, and on leadership and management.

Information about the school

All the pupils at this very small rural school are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is now above average. A much higher proportion of pupils than seen nationally have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although none currently have a statement to support their special educational needs. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age group classes, Reception to Year 2 and Year 3 to Year 6.

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils has risen, particularly with those attending from outside the school's normal catchment area. More join the school during term time than previously. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities has also increased, largely due to the school's growing reputation and expertise. The former acting headteacher has been made permanent, and now leads the confederation arrangements, recently established with another local primary school. Amongst the school's awards is that of bronze Eco-Schools award.

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

Foston is a good and improving school. It is a happy and inclusive school where pupils behave exceptionally well and develop very strong relationships, due to the outstanding care and guidance shown by all adults. All staff know individual children and their families very well indeed and, as a consequence, pupils say that it is a safe environment in which to learn. Parents and carers are highly supportive and confirm how much they feel welcomed in school. They say typically that the school has a 'wonderful community and family feel,' and that the school caters really well for children's 'developmental, learning, social and emotional needs.'

The good curriculum provides wide-ranging activities of which the vast majority of pupils take full advantage. They particularly benefit from the many sporting opportunities that make a positive contribution to their good understanding of the importance of living healthily, and from the interesting 'hands on' experiences in the local environment, especially the 'Forest School'.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that vary enormously from year to year, but that are increasingly lower than expectations for age, especially in writing and mathematics. This is owing to the small numbers in each year group and increases in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They get off to a good start, gaining significant confidence in their personal, social and emotional qualities, with an increasing number reaching the overall goals expected for their age, and some going beyond. Across Key Stages 1 and 2, the vast majority of pupils now make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Many attain above average standards, although overall outcomes vary from year to year because year groups are very small, and the performance of one pupil can have a disproportionate impact on overall results.

Teaching and learning are consistently good, with stimulating activities that are well matched to learners' needs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a particular strength. The curriculum affords relevant and direct opportunities, often linked to the locality, for all pupils to learn through experimentation and investigation. As a consequence, their personal development is good, although their understanding of the lives and experiences of people from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, both nationally and internationally, is not as secure.

The headteacher ensures that good procedures are in place to confirm the school's performance. Self-evaluation is accurate. Recently refined systems to check the rates of progress made by all pupils are effective and contribute to the improvements that are to be seen. The governing body is highly visible in the school community, and understands the strengths and areas for future development. It is confident in challenging the school to improve its outcomes. The governing body is ambitious for all pupils, and has been instrumental in establishing a successful confederation with a local primary school. This

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arrangement is making a marked contribution to improvements in the quality of the school's work and to pupils' outcomes. Subject leaders across both schools play an increasing role in developing teaching and learning, although there remains scope for heightening their skills in assuring the quality and impact of these arrangements. All these characteristics highlight the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Deepen pupils' understanding of the lives and experiences of people from a wide range of religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, both nationally and internationally by :
 - developing close links with schools with non-White British heritage pupils, and in a range of different settings, in England and abroad
 - ensuring that more experiences within the planned curriculum relate to a wider range of cultures, customs and traditions.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluating responsibilities of all subject leaders
- by:
 - introducing a more systematic approach to checking the impact of
- teaching on the quality of pupils' learning and their rates of progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. They readily collaborate to pool ideas and develop each other's thinking. For example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 investigate the differences between two- and three-dimensional shapes, exchanging views about the numbers of faces, edges and vertices, to deepen each other's understanding. Years 1 and 2 pupils eagerly share ideas about rhymes they have explored about different 'pants,' to interpret their own versions through jointly experimenting with increasingly adventurous words and language choices. Pupils of all abilities engage equally well in such tasks. Their positive responses help to narrow the attainment gap between different groups, particularly for those with specific learning needs.

Throughout the school standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising. They are above average for many pupils, particularly those who enter the Early Years Foundation Stage and remain in the school throughout Years 1 to 6. However, standards fluctuate from one year group to another. This is because year groups are very small, the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasing, and the performance of one pupil can have a disproportionate impact on overall outcomes. Nonetheless, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and all teachers now meet effectively pupils' varying needs. As a result, the vast majority achieve well by the end of Year 6. Of particular note, in mathematics, are the frequent opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical skills to real-life problems and an emphasis on oral calculation skills. In English, the quality of writing is enhanced through 'hands on' activities, and interesting resources that stimulate learners to talk to each other, extend each other's thinking, and widen the range of language used. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly good progress. This is because they

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are involved very well indeed in general learning experiences, and benefit from successful support from other adults in one-to-one and small group arrangements.

Pupils develop good individual skills and qualities. They attend well, show a good understanding of how to eat healthily, and a desire to stay fit. They behave exceptionally well and say they feel safe in school, knowing who to turn to with problems. Through their work on the school council, fund raising for local and global charities, responsibilities as playground leaders, and innovative experiences in helping run the local village post office, pupils' spiritual, moral and social qualities develop very well. However, their cultural development is less strong largely because too little work has been undertaken to enhance their appreciation of the different lifestyles of people from diverse countries, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2
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?

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now consistently good. Teachers create an extremely supportive environment that ensures all pupils feel involved and cared for. 'Hands on' opportunities for pupils to explore, experiment, talk, and work together, extend their ideas and viewpoints. Teachers assess frequently the developing levels of knowledge and understanding, using a range of questioning techniques to encourage pupils to think for themselves.

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The quality of marking and written, as well as oral feedback is particularly effective. As a result, the vast majority of pupils understand what they are aiming for, how well they are doing, and what they need to do next. The information gathered about individual pupils is often used well to match activities closely to the wide range of pupils' needs. However, the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress is not yet sufficiently systematic. Adults, other than teachers, make effective contributions to supporting pupils' learning.

The curriculum is good. A range of visits and visitors into school extends what is on offer. For example, pupils benefit from specialist French lessons and music tuition, and extra-curricular activities that include art, film clubs and sport. The curriculum to promote pupils' social and emotional development is particularly strong. The 'Forest School' is at the heart of the excellent use made of the local environment to stimulate pupils' learning. This affords exciting opportunities to learn about the countryside and engage in unique experiences, such as investigating natural materials for painting and making a 'bog' baby. Clear links across all topics for pupils to practise their literacy, mathematical and information and communication technology skills are increasingly embedded, and making a positive difference.

Pupils receive outstanding pastoral care and support. They are known as individuals and have strong levels of confidence in all adults. All staff ensure high levels of welfare, especially for the potentially most vulnerable pupils. Very well-targeted support enables those with specific needs to make the best of the opportunities provided by the school. Effective links with families, local nurseries and secondary schools, mean that induction and transition processes result in all pupils moving smoothly through the different phases of their education. Adults have high expectations, resulting in pupils' regular attendance, outstanding behaviour, and harmonious relationships.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher promotes high aspirations for all learners and ensures efficient day-to-day management of the school. Staff work effectively as a team and morale is good. Self-evaluation is accurate and there are appropriate procedures in place to keep the school's work in check. These include arrangements to check the progress of all pupils, both during and across years. The recent confederation with a local primary school has enabled more flexibility for subject leaders to work alongside each other to share and develop good practice. The school recognises that there is scope to strengthen the contributions they make to judging more critically the quality of all learning experiences, and the particular

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impact they have on individual pupils' progress and achievements. Nonetheless, all adults promote equality of opportunity well, and tackle discrimination efficiently.

Procedures to safeguard pupils are good. They include rigorous arrangements for recruiting staff, and for assessing and managing risks. The school works effectively with key agencies involved in the care and welfare of pupils. The governing body and staff receive regular and good quality training on child protection issues. The school integrates issues about safety into the curriculum well, so that pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Members of the governing body discharge their responsibilities assiduously, meeting regularly with the headteacher to review the impact of all of these arrangements. The good links with the church and chapel, local schools and outside agencies enhance the quality of learning experiences for all pupils. Links with parents and carers are also good. They are kept well informed about pupils' progress and well-being through regular meetings, questionnaires and newsletters.

The governing body carries out its statutory duties well and is influential in determining the long term direction of the school. Members are aspirational on behalf of all pupils and their families. Whilst highly supportive of the headteacher and staff, the governing body is systematically involved in challenging the school to tackle weaknesses and bring about the necessary changes. It has been instrumental in driving forwards the recent confederation with a local primary school, in order to secure better provision and outcomes for all learners.

The school provides equally appropriate opportunities for all pupils to achieve. The strong sense of unity within the school is extended by charity fund raising, contributions to village events, and concerts for local community residents. The school has a strong stance on any suggestion of discrimination. However, at present, there are limited opportunities to draw on the rich and divergent backgrounds of people in different parts of the country, and across the world. The school has firm plans to address this. As a result, the school promotes a satisfactory, rather than a good, understanding of the importance of community cohesion.

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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	2
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 make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The very few children in this age group each year means that starting points vary enormously. An increasing number join with skills that are lower than those expected for their age, particularly in communication and calculation, and some have identified additional needs. Nevertheless, all integrate well and benefit from learning alongside older pupils so that they quickly learn to listen attentively and concentrate on their work.

From the outset, adults provide very strong support for children's welfare, learning and development. Relationships between pre-school settings, families and Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners, are especially effective. There is a good flow of information and regular communication about individual children's needs and developments. Teaching is imaginative and activities carefully planned to respond to all of the key areas of learning. There is now a good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated experiences. Resources are stimulating and invite children to investigate, and develop their ideas and understanding through constant talk.

Outdoor arrangements have improved significantly since the last inspection, and now mirror closely indoor facilities. Many children are enthralled by the exciting contexts for learning, such as the circus, exploring enthusiastically the 'hall of mirrors,' using a microphone to entice customers to individual stalls, and making clowns' faces and circus puppets. They are very well-behaved and respond positively to clear expectations and appropriate levels of praise and encouragement. Consequently, the vast majority gain significant social and emotional confidence, with a large number reaching the overall goals expected for their age, and some going beyond. This is primarily due to good observations and detailed planning by adults that meets children's needs increasingly well. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that adults work well as a team,

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with a common sense of purpose so that all children have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can.

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

Over half of the small number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. All responses were highly supportive of the school. These comments reflect the good feedback from the school's own surveys. Inspectors share the many positive views expressed by parents and carers, in particular about the excellent quality of care, guidance and support that all children receive, and particularly those with specific needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 inspector received 13 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 25 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	85	2	15	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	85	2	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	77	3	23	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)	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	85	2	15	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	85	2	15	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



19 May, 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, York, YO60 7QB

Thank you for your very warm welcome when I visited your school. I really appreciated your help and enjoyed chatting with you and listening to your views. This letter is to let you know what I found out.

Foston Primary is a good and improving school. You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where you learn well. You make good progress across Years 1 to 6, with many of you now reaching above average standards. I agree with many of you and your parents and carers who told us how kind the adults are and how much you enjoy school. You behave exceptionally well and are really supportive towards each other. Many of you set a good example by participating enthusiastically in the daily 'activate' sessions, and taking care of one another during lunchtimes in the village hall. I was really impressed by your work in managing the local post office in school, and the contributions of the school council to school and village life. You clearly enjoy the opportunities to explore the local countryside, sing and take part in local sporting fixtures. All the adults take excellent care of you. These things happen because your headteacher and the governing body work effectively to improve what is happening in school. One reason for the inspection was to see what your school could do even better. I have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to work on some things. I would like them to:

- ensure you understand more about the very different lifestyles and priorities of people from a range of religious, ethnic and social backgrounds, both within this country and across the world
- strengthen the contributions of all teachers in checking the quality of the school's work and in making sure that everyone is learning as well as they can.

You can all help by continuing to work hard to reach your targets and to support each other.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Swallow

Lead Inspector

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