

Picklenash Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115733
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	357808
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aidan Dowle
Headteacher	Lin Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed a total of 17 lessons taught by eight teachers. Inspectors met with parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and groups of pupils including some from Year 6. They observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work, the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning, and the tracking of pupils' progress. They analysed the responses from 86 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The profile of pupils' progress, especially the boys in writing, girls in mathematics and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well teachers tailor the lessons to the needs and abilities of pupils, and inspire them to improve their work.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers, and their capacity to ensure high quality teaching and improving pupil outcomes.

Information about the school

The school is of below average size for its type. Most pupils are White British. There is a small, but growing proportion of pupils from other White backgrounds, many of whom speak Polish as their first language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

The school has been through a period of rapid change and unrest. In July 2010, the deputy headteacher moved to another school. The headteacher left suddenly the following October. Following a range of temporary measures, the local authority provided an experienced, temporary headteacher in December 2010. He provided interim leadership until the end of April 2011 when the school was successfully federated with the neighbouring infant school and a new governing body appointed. The headteacher of the infant school was appointed headteacher of the federated schools with effect from 1 May 2011.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Several of the strengths identified in the previous inspection report have been sustained. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and participate regularly in activities that help them do so. Although many parents and carers express concerns about the recent uncertainties surrounding the school, the great majority hold the school and the staff team in high regard and are optimistic for the future.

Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has been broadly in line with the national average for the past three years. The school's recently improved approaches to tracking pupils' progress suggest that girls have tended to perform better than boys in writing, but boys slightly better than girls in mathematics. Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work shows this gap is narrowing. The school is beginning to set more challenging targets and recognises the need to raise attainment. The profile of the current Year 5 includes pupils with some significant special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently, most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have made satisfactory gains from their starting points in Year 3.

The new headteacher has been swift to identify that inconsistencies in teaching are limiting the extent of pupils' achievements. Teaching is rarely less than satisfactory, but there is not enough that is good or outstanding. While all teachers plan assiduously, the match of task to abilities, the quality of questioning and feedback to pupils varies from class to class. There is evidence of some imaginative teaching that builds effectively on pupils' first-hand experiences in science, but overall, there are too few opportunities for investigative work, especially in mathematics. The curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities for pupils, but lacks coherence. Pupils are adequately equipped in the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, but opportunities for them to develop these progressively in other subjects are not yet evident in all classes.

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The new headteacher has a secure oversight of the work of the school and is building the confidence of her staff team. There have been improvements in the school's approaches to tracking pupils' progress, and attainment in mathematics has moved closer to that in English. Middle leaders are appropriately engaged in a variety of monitoring activities, but the impact of this work is not yet apparent in improved teaching and learning. A new governing body reflects the continuing commitment of those who successfully steered the process of federation. They meet their statutory responsibilities and are on course to eliminate a small budget deficit.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress so that attainment in English and mathematics exceeds the national average for pupils in Year 6 by July 2013.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that by December 2011 at least 80% of lessons are good or better by ensuring:
 - a close match of task to pupils' abilities
 - teachers' questions probe pupils' understanding and stimulate discussion
 - there are increased opportunities for independent working and practical investigative work such as problem solving in mathematics.
- Increase the effectiveness of middle leaders so that they have a secure oversight of provision and pupils' progress across the school by:
 - carrying out a thorough analysis of test and assessment data
 - regularly evaluating the quality of pupils' work
 - modelling effective teaching across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils usually display positive attitudes in lessons and enjoy their learning, though this commitment can weaken if the teacher talks for too long or the work lacks challenge. As a result of these types of variation in the school's provision, pupils' achievement remains satisfactory. The learning of pupils in Years 3 and 4 was enlivened by opportunities to dissect tomato plants. There was a hushed excitement as pupils used magnifiers to look in detail at the cross-section of leaves, stems and roots. Their artistic three-dimensional representations of the different parts of plants revealed strong observational skills, while their conversations with the inspector showed good gains in their understanding of the functions served by each.

Inspectors' analysis of pupils' books shows that in English, pupils are writing for a good range of purposes. They usually take care to present their work neatly, but expectations for the use of ink are inconsistent. Although an increasing number of boys and girls in Year 6 write at the higher levels, opportunities to edit and revisit their work are not embedded in all classes. In mathematics, pupils are producing a satisfactory volume of work, but too often are reinforcing existing skills and knowledge rather than forging ahead learning new ones. This is especially the case in the development of problem-solving skills. In Years 5 and 6, teachers encouraged pupils to generate their own data to introduce the concept of mean and median. Although pupils enjoyed the practical activity, the subsequent mathematics was inadequately matched to abilities and some of the lower attainers struggled to keep up.

A strong commitment to art and music helps enrich the curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about the increasing cultural diversity of the school. For instance, many know words and phrases in Polish and have discussed similarities and differences in schools in England and Poland. Most pupils say they enjoy school because they feel safe, secure and valued. They offer a friendly and polite welcome to visitors and behave well during lessons. Their positive relationships with teachers lead them to act responsibly in and around the school.

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A few younger pupils say that occasional boisterous behaviour at lunchtimes can sometimes make them uneasy. However, most pupils act with due consideration towards their peers and action is underway to ensure this is always the case. Pupils have a good appreciation of what it means to live a healthy life. They are interested in the school's health promotion strategies and participate enthusiastically. They enjoy physical education lessons and make the most of the opportunities provided at sports clubs after school.

Attendance levels for the current academic year are securely average as some decisive action has helped improve them. Close checks are kept on the few persistent absentees and the school is working effectively with these families to encourage prompt, regular attendance. Conversations with the school council show that pupils play an active part in supporting the development of the school and its day-to-day running. There are good links with the local community. The school is regularly involved with visiting senior citizens and participates in a number of local events. Pupils also raise money for a wide range of charitable organisations, including those working in other countries such as Tanzania. However, pupils' understanding of the social and cultural diversity of the United Kingdom is less developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Good relationships between staff and pupils support a positive ethos for learning. Most lessons proceed at a steady pace because teachers' classroom management skills and

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subject knowledge are secure. Occasionally, the introductions go on for too long and pupils, though well behaved, find it hard to sustain their concentration. Although lesson plans are detailed and identify appropriate objectives, the match of work to pupils' abilities is not always sharp enough. There are only limited opportunities for pupils to pursue the investigations or independent work of which they are capable. Teaching assistants sometimes make valuable contributions in supporting learning, but occasionally their impact is less apparent, because they are not actively involved in supporting pupils when the teacher is introducing the lesson.

Teachers make accurate assessment of pupils' work, but do not always make use of this knowledge to drive forward learning. Their marking tells pupils when they have met the lesson objective but does not always show them the next steps in learning. Approaches to ensuring that work is corrected and improved are inconsistent.

While the school's curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities, it lacks coherence. Current curriculum planning enables teachers to make helpful links between subjects, but work is seldom matched well to the interests, needs and abilities of individual pupils. Pupils have adequate opportunities to apply their skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology in other subjects.

Satisfactory attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The school provides a welcoming environment that celebrates pupils' work. Pupils who are potentially vulnerable are identified, but until recently the targeting of support has lacked rigour. Inspection evidence shows that the overwhelming majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for, but that the quality of learning support strategies provided by teaching assistants is inconsistent. Transition arrangements between infant and junior schools are secure and there are plans to improve further the links with secondary partners.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher is highly motivated, has made accurate evaluation of the school and what needs to be improved. She has the confidence of staff, parents, carers and pupils who are eager to support the new federation and improve the school. New systems mean that the progress of individual pupils is now tracked in greater detail. A secure start has been made in using this information as the basis for discussions with teachers about the progress of pupils, although it is too early to assess the impact of this on their performance management. The school can now provide a reasonable degree of detail about the performance of groups and individuals and demonstrate how boys' performance

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in writing is improving. Details of the background and abilities of those attending extra-curricular activities are also beginning to be analysed. This shows satisfactory action to promote equality of opportunity and ensure there is no discrimination.

Middle leaders have responded enthusiastically to recently increased opportunities to develop their responsibilities. They have extended their work in support of teachers' planning to include analysis of pupils' work. However, the links between this, the detailed analysis of assessment data and how this should inform improvements to teaching, or in modelling good practice, are at an early stage of development.

The new governing body includes many of the past governors who were instrumental in federating the school. Close working with the acting headteacher has ensured governors meet all of their statutory requirements. However, though safeguarding is secure, arrangements for the review of policies and evaluation of their impact are currently being revised to bring greater rigour and alignment with those at the partner school. Actions to review finances under the new arrangements are well advanced. Plans to promote community cohesion are appropriate and reflect a secure understanding of the local context. However, early initiatives to develop pupils' awareness of the social diversity elsewhere in the United Kingdom are less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Around 56% of the parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Although many wrote to the inspectors to share their concerns about the events of the past 12 months, most express satisfaction with the work of the school. In particular, many of these comments paid tribute to the hard work of the staff during a period of uncertain leadership. Many others wrote to affirm their commitment to the new federation and the leadership of the new headteacher. Not all comments were positive. A small minority do

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not feel that their children are making enough progress and would like the school to do more to enable them to support their children's learning at home. Inspectors judge that, while the great majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, it should be faster. Approaches to homework and engaging parents and carers in pupils' learning are inconsistent. A few parents and carers also do not feel that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judge from this inspection that the behaviour of the great majority of pupils is good and that this is supported by a range of appropriate rewards and sanctions that are currently under review.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Picklenash Junior 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 164 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	43	44	51	5	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	44	45	52	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	30	48	56	7	8	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	31	42	49	9	10	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	27	31	45	52	6	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	29	45	52	11	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	33	52	60	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)	30	35	46	53	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	29	46	53	4	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	23	42	49	9	10	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	28	43	50	5	6	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	31	40	47	4	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	37	42	49	5	6	2	2

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.



25 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Picklenash Junior School, Newent, GL18 1BG

Thank you very much for your polite and friendly welcome during the recent inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you all. Your questionnaires and conversations with the inspectors were extremely useful in helping us to find out about your school.

You told us you enjoy school and we could see that in most lessons and in much of your work. However, there are one or two things we want to happen that will make your school even better. Over the past few years, your results in the national tests for English and mathematics have been average (something Years 5 and 6 were learning about during our visit). We want you to make sure that the results at Picklenash are always better than the national average.

In order to achieve this, we have asked the teachers to help you make faster progress, by:

- setting you more challenging work
- asking you questions that make you think hard and discuss
- giving you the opportunity to do more practical activities

In the meantime, the headteacher and staff, with the help of the governors and your parents and carers, are going to keep a close eye on how things are going. They are aiming to make this school not just satisfactory, but good. Together, all of you can help make it happen!

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead inspector

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