

Pentland Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111642
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	378327
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Guy
Headteacher	Hazel Ducker
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed 13 class teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They analysed 91 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at pupils' progress and achievement data; resource based provision programmes; intervention and support programmes; documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils; school policies and plans for improving the quality of learning. They scrutinised pupils' current work and spoke to a local authority officer to discuss the recent review conclusions.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of learning and the rate of progress made by all groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6, especially in developing boys' literacy skills and challenging both more-able pupils and middle-ability girls.
- The quality of teaching and its effectiveness in accelerating rates of pupils' progress and tackling any underachievement to close progress and attainment gaps.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in meeting the full range of children's needs, particularly in the Reception classes.
- The extent to which senior leaders, including the governing body, are tackling weakness and demonstrating the capacity to bring about and sustain improvements.

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average sized primary school. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage, with none at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. The school accommodates a local authority, 10 place resource base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/disabilities, with a lower than average proportion with a statement of special educational needs. One third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2011 and a new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body appointed in the summer term 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

This is a satisfactory school. It is rapidly improving because the headteacher, adeptly supported by the deputy headteacher, has swiftly established a positive climate for learning and increasingly high expectations. A strengthened governing body and the staff share the same clear vision and ambition for the school. As a result, there is a determination to ensure that all pupils have the same happy experiences and achieve success. The school has effective links with parents and carers who are overwhelmingly positive in their support and are happy with their children's enjoyment and experiences in the school.

Most children enter the Nursery with skills and experiences well below the levels expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, overall attainment is average. It is broadly average in English but below average in mathematics. Increasingly, activities to promote enjoyment and to encourage pupils to use a range of skills are planned, although opportunities are not always provided for them to apply mathematical skills to solve problems. Progress is satisfactory overall, with clear indication of a faster rate of progress emerging, but the pattern remains variable. This is especially the case when activities are not matched accurately to pupils' age and abilities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as their peers. Teaching is satisfactory and signs of improvement were observed. However, the expectations and demands made of pupils are variable, especially those made of more-able pupils. In lessons where progress is slower, approaches are less thought provoking, questioning does not always require pupils to explain their answers and activities lack variety and pace. Frequent positive marking of pupils' work is helpful, but written guidance for improvement is not consistently provided.

Good care, support and guidance promote good habits, attitudes and enjoyment. Concerted action has resulted in pupils' good behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Pupils take pride in their decision-making role and make an effective contribution to the community.

The headteacher's ambitious vision, drive and accurate evaluation of strengths and areas for development underpin the school's improvement planning. She has quickly established a strong focus on enriching the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Rigorous checks on pupils' well-being and development are now in place and inform future planning and performance management. Positive collaborative working with

agencies and local authority specialists is adding to the improvement of provision and pupils' progress. Middle leaders are gaining in confidence in contributing to the drive for improvement. Effective action has been taken by the headteacher, and some firm strategic decisions taken by the governing body, to improve the quality of teaching and learning but inconsistencies remain. The capacity to continue to improve is satisfactory with clear signs that it is steadily strengthening.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, raise attainment and boost achievement in Years 1 to 6, particularly in mathematics by:
 - raising the expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve
 - ensuring that pupils' thinking is relentlessly challenged and questioned to ensure they explain their ideas and solutions
 - ensuring that activities allow pupils to apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving situations.

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - making more effective use of assessment information to match activities to age and abilities, particularly for the more-able pupils
 - increasing the use of imaginative approaches to inspire pupils' thinking, sustain their interest and promote even more enjoyment
 - making certain that teachers' written feedback in pupils' books provides them with well-defined steps on how to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' positive attitudes and teaching, which is increasingly focused upon enriching learning, are helping to quicken progress, although the pattern is inconsistent across all groups of pupils and subjects. As a result, overall progress is satisfactory. In lessons where pupils' thinking is challenged and activities sustain their concentration, progress is faster, especially in developing their basic skills. For example, a group of pupils were observed acting out the feelings and emotions of Second World War evacuees travelling by steam train to their new home in the country.

Achievement is satisfactory and progress and attainment gaps for different groups are starting to close, especially in boys' reading and writing. Overall attainment is broadly average in English but below average in mathematics. Pupils gain confidence in basic numeracy skills but are less agile in handling numbers to solve problems. Pupils do not always present their work clearly and, despite some improvements, it often lacks refinement and sophistication. Intervention and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the resource base,

are more effectively targeted on individual needs and enable pupils to make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a positive contribution to their good relationships with each other and adults. Pupils are sensible, considerate and helpful. They show a good understanding of how to stay safe. They have a good grasp of the benefits of keeping active and eating healthily. Pupils report that bullying is rare and any inappropriate behaviour is managed quickly and effectively. They happily take on responsibility, such as organising play activities at playtimes. Older pupils, in particular, demonstrate considerate and helpful attitudes. They are keen to make positive contributions to the local community, for example, joining in the celebrations to mark the centenary of the nearby Transporter Bridge on the River Tees. Attendance is average and pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the future.

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	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but improving as the skills and talents of staff are fostered and developed. When teaching is good, the demands on pupils are challenging and learning is more active and meaningful. As a result, pupils become more engaged in their work. This was observed when pupils produced a computer picture presentation on Switzerland. In the best lessons, questions are probing and used to check pupils' thinking and pupils become more motivated to build upon their understanding. Progress is slower when teaching is satisfactory but with insufficiently inspiring activities and ineffective use of time. For example, when teachers' input is too lengthy pupils become restless, their concentration slips and their understanding becomes confused. Assessment information is increasingly used to pinpoint intervention and support for potentially vulnerable pupils, but activities are not always differentiated accurately to enable pupils to progressively build on their learning.

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

The satisfactory curriculum is being gradually enriched to ensure it meets the needs of both boys and girls. Extending the use of themes and linking subjects together in more imaginative ways are increasing enthusiasm and adding to pupils' enjoyment. Opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills across the curriculum, but not enough activities encourage pupils to apply their mathematical skills to unravel problems. There is good provision for the pupils' personal development, for example, when pupils are taught how to keep safe when using social media. Effective partnerships with health professionals and the emergency services play a significant role in pupils' good awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe.

The good care, guidance and support which the pupils receive are emerging strengths of the school provision. Pupils are relaxed and calm in the happy, friendly atmosphere. Staff can point to particular successes in helping pupils and their families overcome difficulties and barriers, to enable them to once more enjoy their learning. This is especially the case for those pupils in the resource base. It is also evident in the improvement in attendance, especially in the reduction of persistent absence. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the time staff make available to discuss any worries or concerns. The good links with specialist support agencies make a valuable contribution to raising family aspirations for their children. This is also providing the school with the opportunity to personalise intervention and accurately target the support which each pupil requires.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There are clear signs of improvement in nearly all of the school's work. Staff feel their contributions are valued and are increasingly encouraged to demand more of pupils to bring about sustained improvement. The growing confidence of middle leaders is adding to the momentum of improvement, although the full effect of their actions is yet to be seen. For example, the monitoring of teaching is now robust, but weaker elements of teaching remain. Rigorous checks on pupils' progress are identifying underachievement and prompt action is closing the gaps in pupils' performance. The restructured governing body provides satisfactory support and is especially influential in creating a climate in which the well-being of all pupils is paramount. Nevertheless, skills and experiences of individual members of the governing body are not used to full effect to shape the work of the school.

Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and improving as the unevenness in the pattern of progress and achievement is being systematically addressed. The positive engagement of parents and carers ensure that they are progressively involved in their children's development. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily, with positive links with the local town and a developing range of experiences broadening the pupils' understanding of the diverse world in which they live. Safeguarding

procedures and requirements are met, with pupils demonstrating a good awareness of how to manage risk.

These are the grades for the 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	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	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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly and happily in the warm friendly and lively Nursery environment. Most children arrive with skills well below those expected for their age, often with speech and language weaknesses. Overall progress is satisfactory. Progress in the Nursery class is good because of the variety and range of interesting activities that constantly motivate children's thinking. This includes a stimulating range of opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, that enable children to initiate their own learning, for example, keeping fit by exercising in the Pentland gym. In the Reception class, progress is satisfactory and improving, but provision is less strong than in the Nursery class. Children in the Reception class enjoy a variety of activities outdoors, although there are more limited opportunities than in Nursery for them to find things out for themselves. Relationships are good and children are generally well-behaved and follow classroom routines well, particularly in the Nursery class. They are encouraged to learn and play independently and explore together.

A strength in provision is the regular practising of sounds and letters, and this promotes positive approaches to early reading and writing. For example, a group of children were observed totally absorbed in sounding out names of furry creatures pulled from a bag, making certain that the onlooking scarecrow approved. Good leadership and management have led to the establishment of routines to systematically observe and assess children's development and adults are gaining the confidence to accurately evaluate the gains children make. Welfare requirements are met successfully with children giving consideration to their safety in selected activities. The positive impact of the good leadership and management can be seen in the increasingly accurate assessment of children's skills and experiences on entry to the Nursery. This is providing a much firmer focus for making certain all children achieve as well as they can by the end of the Reception Year. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader's ambition is evident in the recent relocation of the Reception class and in the increasingly better quality of learning outdoors.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Under one third of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire with their views of the school. The views expressed were almost entirely positive about the quality of care the school provides and all indicated that their children are kept safe and enjoy school. All parents and carers were happy with their children’s experiences at Pentland School. Inspection evidence supported the parents’ and carers’ views on the care and well-being of their children, but found other aspects to be satisfactory and these are explained in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pentland 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 279 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	54	41	45	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	60	36	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	48	46	51	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	52	41	45	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	53	41	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	51	41	45	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	46	46	51	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)	42	46	40	44	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	45	47	52	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	40	51	56	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	36	48	53	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	37	49	54	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	58	35	38	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pentland Primary School, Billingham, TS23 2RG

I want to thank you all for the happy and friendly welcome that you gave the inspectors and me when we visited to see how well you were learning. We really enjoyed our time talking to you.

Pentland is a satisfactory, but rapidly improving school, which has a number of positive features. We were impressed by the way your headteacher and staff constantly encourage and support you to do well. Consequently, your school enjoys good relationships with your parents and carers and has effective partnerships with groups outside school that help you with your personal development. Your school has made certain that staff work closely with other services to help improve your behaviour, keenness to learn and your attendance. We were pleased by your sensible behaviour and the good care taken of you. You clearly feel safe and happy because of this. You understand well the benefits that a healthy lifestyle can bring. You take pride in helping the school to improve and actively helping to manage playtime activities. Some of you told us that teachers make your learning fun.

Your headteacher and the governing body are taking very positive action to improve the school and this can be seen in your quickening rates of progress and your improving skills. The senior leaders have been asked to help you make even faster progress, achieve more and to reach higher standards by the end of Year 6, especially in mathematics. We have asked the school to improve the quality of teaching to make certain those of you who can tackle more demanding work make faster progress and achieve as well as you possibly can. We have also asked that you are given more opportunities, to practise your skills in all subjects, but especially to use your mathematical skills to solve problems.

You can all play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can and by telling your teachers if work is too easy or too hard.

All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts
Lead Inspector

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