



Prestbury St Mary's Church of England Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115696
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279658
Inspection dates 11 July 2006 to 12 July 2006
Reporting inspector Patricia Davies AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Bouncers Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Prestbury
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 5JB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 244387
Number on roll	237	Fax number	01242 244387
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Daphne Philpot
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Nicki Bennett

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Prestbury St Mary's Junior is an average-sized school situated in the village of Prestbury on the outskirts of Cheltenham. Most pupils live in or very close to the village on established estates, although some live in nearby social housing. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is a little higher than average. At the start of Year 3, pupils' attainment is above average, with a relative weakness in writing.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Prestbury St Mary's is a good school, its strength captured in the observation of one parent who wrote, 'this school has a near perfect balance of fun, enthusiasm and good teaching.' Value for money is good. Pupils enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities in and out of lessons. Teaching and learning are good as a whole, and were outstanding in Years 5 and 6 during this inspection. These factors lead to good overall achievement, with particularly rapid progress in Years 5 and 6. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards are well above average. Improvements to the curriculum and assessment have been especially successful in English, but innovation has been somewhat slower in mathematics in relation to links with other subjects and learning targets. In addition, not all pupils regularly receive 'critical' feedback on how their work could be improved, not just in mathematics but other subjects too. These factors constrain pupils' progress from being even better than it is already.

The school's Christian background has a strong influence on pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and very thoughtful about the needs and feelings of others.

The school has a clear view of its overall effectiveness, which it also judges to be good, and is well led and managed. Staff members are energetic and committed and the constant and successful drive to do better demonstrates much capacity for further improvement. Monitoring is thorough and detailed, and subject leaders are taking a greater role in these activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make use of learning targets and opportunities to apply mathematical knowledge in other subjects in order to promote pupils' numeracy skills still further.
- Give pupils consistent 'critical' feedback on how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and make particularly rapid progress during Years 5 and 6 in response to high expectations and challenging targets. Pupils' work at the start of Year 3 and the school's own early assessments show that pupils start the school with above-average attainment. Writing is a relative weakness within this positive picture.

Pupils make good progress from Years 3 to 6. Although progress is variable during Years 3 and 4, it picks up considerably in the following two years. As a result, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Indeed, national test results in English have been exceptionally high in four of the last five years. Higher ability pupils are provided for well. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 have gradually increased

in each of these subjects, including writing, and were significantly above average in the 2005 tests.

Pupils achieve well in mathematics overall because they complete a good range of work and activities are mostly matched well to their needs. However, greater progress is constrained because curriculum initiatives and the introduction of learning targets have not yet been fully extended to include mathematics. Achievement in science is promoted effectively through the use of open-ended investigatory tasks.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The considerable maturity of those in Year 6 illustrates pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Behaviour in all year groups is excellent. Pupils say that there are no incidents of bullying and they always feel safe in school. They talk knowledgeably about personal safety and the need for a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils' enjoyment of school life is reflected in high levels of participation in school clubs and above-average attendance. Most take part in lessons with much interest although, sometimes, younger pupils tend to be passive and retiring during discussion with the whole class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is high and successfully fostered by the school's Christian foundation, which quietly permeates all aspects of daily life. During worship, pupils are clearly moved by images of children in war zones or, equally, by examples of beauty in nature. Pupils have a mature understanding of cultural differences and similarities, nurtured through the school's wide-ranging and rich curriculum.

Pupils agree that school council members represent their views effectively. However, that sense of responsibility to all members of the school's community is more widely spread. For example, pupils enthusiastically created 'mock' advertisements extolling the benefits of a new year group with the intention of easing the transition of pupils in to their new classes in September. This high degree of social awareness, combined with confident academic skills, means that pupils are gaining the competences they need to be successful in adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The strength of the school's good teaching lies in its exciting lesson activities. The potential of these opportunities is used to the greatest advantage in Years 5 and 6, where pupils respond with high levels of productivity and motivation. The overall quality of teaching seen in these year groups was outstanding. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 is often good, but it is sometimes satisfactory and, consequently, these pupils do not learn at the same fast pace as the older pupils.

Where expectations are high, discussion is challenging – really testing out pupils' understanding and taking it further. Nevertheless, at the same time, learning is fun and these demanding discussions are marked by liveliness and humour. The use of 'role play' is particularly effective in English because it allows pupils to thoroughly explore the text and gain a deep understanding of character and theme. Time is given to preparing and drafting written pieces, while also expecting pupils to work at a good pace. In Years 3 and 4, however, teaching sometimes does not make the most of opportunities to extend pupils' thinking, or middle-attaining pupils spend too long consolidating their mathematical understanding before moving on. Pupils often share their thoughts with a partner or small group, but these opportunities are sometimes missed in these classes. Consequently, pupils have less chance to explore their ideas and are, therefore, sometimes not as well prepared as they could be for later tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum successfully promotes learning because it gives as much attention to providing exciting and creative experiences as it does to ensuring that basic skills are secure. The range of clubs is extensive and pupils take part in many activities over lunch time and after school. Themed weeks, when the emphasis falls on a particular subject such as science, are popular. Trips to the seaside, for example, produce high-quality work on environmental issues.

The school is constantly at pains to improve its curriculum through further refinement. For example, topics are now more relevant because they are linked to pupils' own experience, or bring several subjects together. The current focus on 'change,' for example, has been placed in the context of starting a new school year. It has influenced literacy activities while, during worship, pupils have also explored the deeper issues of change. However, pupils' opportunity to apply their mathematical understanding is inhibited because the integration of numeracy activities into other subjects is not as far advanced as it is for literacy and information and communication technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care is outstanding in several aspects, and particularly in the school's knowledge of individual pupils. As one parent commented, in this school 'every child really does matter.' Conspicuous attention is given to pupils' health, safety and general well-being. Pupils feel confident that there is always someone to go to if ever they need help. The position of 'peer mediator' is a much respected and appreciated responsibility. Child protection procedures are thorough and there are good links with outside services to support individual pupils.

Educational guidance and support has many effective features, including successful arrangements for reviewing and directing the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to assess their own learning, clear learning targets in literacy and 'maths surgeries' where they can gain extra help. However, there are also some shortcomings that inhibit progress from being even

better than it is. For example, because there are no learning targets in mathematics, pupils' evaluation of their progress is less detailed than it is in English. Also, while some pupils receive a high level of feedback on how to improve their work, this practice is not yet consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The energy and vision of senior managers form the driving force behind the school's good leadership and management. Staff members and pupils alike have caught this ready enthusiasm, which is illustrated in the frequently lively 'buzz' of lessons. The school is constantly exploring how it can refine and improve what it does. Improvements to the curriculum and assessment have brought a real excitement to learning and ensured that work is challenging and matched well to pupils' needs and interests. These improvements have been particularly successfully developed in English, for instance, although innovation has been relatively slower in mathematics. Nevertheless, all these attributes indicate the school has good capacity for bringing about future improvement. The school knows itself well and has a clear view of where it needs to go because it examines its work in detail. Academic data is carefully analysed and monitoring activities are wide ranging and thorough. Senior staff members carry out many of these tasks, but subject leaders are increasingly involved. One governor remarked of the school that a 'partnership of stakeholders makes it a strong institution.' This is true. There is considerable consultation with staff, pupils and parents and much liaison with the infant school. Governors have a comprehensive network of monitoring activities and plan to increase the effectiveness of their work by evaluating the impact of their activities more closely.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school while we were with you. First and foremost, you and your parents think your school is good, and we agree with you.

What your school does particularly well:

- There are lots of really exciting and enjoyable activities in and out of lessons, and you enjoy the many lunchtime and after-school clubs and other fun activities, such as 'Science Week,' when the helicopter landed in the playground!
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are very thoughtful and caring about the well-being of others.
- Adults in school take good care of you so that you feel safe and know you have someone to talk to if you have a problem.
- You all do well in your work, and particularly those of you in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is really lively and challenging.
- The staff are always finding ways to make things even better and more interesting for you.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Give you the chance to use your good numeracy skills in other subjects and the opportunity to have learning targets for mathematics, as you do for English.
- Make sure you all get written feedback about how to improve your work.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead Inspector