



Pirton School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117128
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 279990
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Joyce Cox AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Community		SG5 3PS
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 712370
Number on roll	125	Fax number	01462 713555
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Derek Jarrett
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Jeni Houghton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school situated in the village of Pirton in Hertfordshire. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language and 14% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A below average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. When children start in the Reception class their abilities are generally slightly above the expected level for their age. The new headteacher took on the position of Acting Headteacher at the school in June 2005 and became the substantive headteacher in May 2006. The school has been accredited with Healthy School status since 2004. Since November 2005 the school has been part of a Primary Learning Network with other local village schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with an exceptionally accurate view of how well it is doing. It provides good value for money. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start in their education and virtually all children attain the required standard on entry to Year 1. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and high by Year 6. Pupils' personal development is good because of the good provision to ensure their well-being. All pupils including those with learning difficulties achieve well because the quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to think about how well they are doing in their work but they are not always told exactly what to do next in order to improve. The curriculum is planned carefully and enriched through a very good range of interesting activities. Older pupils say they feel well prepared for the next stage in their education. The majority of parents are very happy with what the school provides but a small number have concerns regarding the mixed age classes. The inspector found no grounds for their concerns as all pupils achieve well. The headteacher and the senior teacher provide good leadership. They are relatively new to their roles but in a short time have succeeded in significantly improving many aspects of the school. The headteacher has skilfully made sure that leadership is successfully focused on raising standards, improving teaching and promoting the well-being of all pupils. The school has begun to use assessment information effectively to track pupils' progress but recognises further work is needed. This is also true in the case of subject leaders' involvement in raising standards and achievement in their subjects. The school has made good improvement since its last inspection especially in terms of its self-evaluation leaving it very well placed to make further progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that pupils are clear about how to improve their work. - Continue to develop how pupils' attainment is recorded to make it easy for staff to track their progress throughout the school. - Carry on improving the way subject leaders influence standards and achievement in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class and almost all children attain the expected standard on entry to Year 1. Year 2 pupils' make good progress and they reach above average levels. In 2005, standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 were exceptionally high in English and science and above average in mathematics. Over half the pupils attained the higher Level 5 in English and science. Senior leaders set increasingly challenging targets for Year 6 pupils to attain in national tests and these are normally achieved and often exceeded. Standards in writing and in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved considerably since the last inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as they

are quickly identified and receive good support from the special needs coordinator, class teachers and support staff. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The pupils are very happy at school because they feel well cared for and enjoy learning. Behaviour is consistently good and this makes a significant contribution to the safe and friendly atmosphere throughout the school. Attendance is good as is the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The headteacher has good plans to improve the satisfactory cultural provision. Pupils take on responsibility readily and make an effective contribution to the school through, for example, the well-established and effective school council. They are pleased that such things as playground waste bins have resulted from their suggestions. Pupils also contribute to the local community, through performances to senior citizens and through involvement with the church. Pupils are very aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and enjoy taking part in the many opportunities for sport and physical activity. Pupils make good progress in acquiring the numeracy, literacy and social skills, which will help them in their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers have good levels of expertise, are lively and convey their enthusiasm to pupils, who in turn enjoy learning. They have positive relationships with their classes and develop pupils' interest in their work effectively. Throughout the school, teachers challenge pupils of differing ages and abilities well. The one area to improve is to make sure that pupils are fully involved in their learning by using assessment data to set individual targets. Teaching assistants are capable, competent and highly valued members of the team. They happily and confidently provide good support in lessons to all pupils and in particular to those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers diligently record the standards and progress that pupils make and the leadership team is currently working on ways to help teachers to track pupils' progress throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The headteacher has worked very hard to improve the curriculum provision to make sure that it meets the needs of all pupils in the mixed aged classes. Improved ICT provision and its effective use have a positive impact on learning. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils have just completed a highly successful project about the village using a digital camera. The curriculum is skilfully adapted to meet the needs and abilities of

pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Reception children get off to a good start because they learn through a wide variety of practical experiences. The curriculum for other pupils is planned carefully to be relevant, practical and interesting. Good links are being developed between subjects. A very good range of enticing enrichment activities is provided, such as sword dancing, choir, sports and musical clubs. These, together with a good number of visits and visitors, bring pupils' learning to life and have a very positive impact on their personal and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and this contributes well to their good progress, sense of well-being and to their great enjoyment of school. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can talk to adults if they have any concerns. Procedures to ensure they are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are well established. Health and safety issues highlighted in the last inspection report have been completely resolved. Pupils talk warmly of how their teachers help them learn and they greatly appreciate the sports and other activities organised outside the school day. Support for pupils who have learning difficulties, or disabilities, is good. Adults in the school know the pupils well and are sensitive to any who may be upset or needing support. The school makes good use of help and advice from outside agencies. Although some teachers are beginning to give pupils targets for their learning, this process is not yet sufficiently developed to give pupils a full and clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since her arrival just over a year ago the new headteacher has successfully made many improvements to curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. She has also implemented many much needed improvements to the accommodation, which has resulted in a bright learning environment. A good programme has also been established to check and improve teaching and learning which has led to improved pupil achievement. Together with the senior teacher the headteacher has also made significant strides forward in involving all staff more in school improvement. Subject leader roles have been developed and they now monitor teaching and learning in their subjects by completing lesson observations and the scrutiny of planning and completed work. The headteacher is a highly skilled communicator and has established very good links with other local schools and external agencies. As a consequence the school has become increasingly popular and pupil numbers have risen. Governors provide a very good level of support and have developed effective strategies, which enable them to be involved in evaluating the school's work for themselves. They are currently evolving ways to judge their own effectiveness. The headteacher's commitment and purposeful leadership together with a strong sense of teamwork has successfully moved the school forward rapidly. The school's self-evaluation is excellent as the new headteacher and the senior teacher have an

exceptionally accurate and clear view of its strengths and areas to develop. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, which together with the headteacher's intelligent and purposeful leadership means that the school shows a very good capacity to improve further.

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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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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	1	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

I enjoyed my visit to Pirton. I discovered a great deal about your school by talking to you and watching you learn. I thought that you would like to know what I liked about your school and how I thought it could get even better. - You made me feel very welcome and greeted me with a smile. - You enjoy coming to school because you feel safe and you really like your teachers. - You all get on well together and you know right from wrong. - You work hard and you are good learners. - Your headteacher has improved many aspects of the school. - Year 6 pupils reach high standards in their work. Your headteacher runs the school well and your parents are right to think that you go to a good school. What I have asked the school to do now to make it even better is: - To make sure you know how to improve your work by giving you targets. - To make it easy for teachers to track how well you are doing. - To ensure that subject leaders help the headteacher to make your work even better in all subjects. I wish you all the very best in the future.