



Pollyplatt Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120472
LEA LINCOLNSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280822
Inspection dates 3 July 2006 to 4 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Brennan AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Community		LN1 2TP
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01522 730393
Number on roll	113	Fax number	01522 730393
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.R Boatman
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr. J Beaven

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 3 July 2006 - 4 July 2006	Inspection number 280822
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school is situated on a Royal Air Force base. Approximately half of the pupils are from service families and half from civilian families, many of whom also live on the base. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The majority of pupils stay at the school for less than two years. Over 80% of the pupils in Year 6 started at the school other than the usual time, with over a quarter joining since the start of Year 5. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is low. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties or other disabilities is broadly average. Children's skills and abilities on entry to school are a little below average, especially in writing. There has been considerable disruption to staffing in recent years, including, until the appointment of the present headteacher last year, a lengthy period when there was a succession of acting headteachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspection agreed with the school's view that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and that it is improving. This is a school that is improving well after a turbulent period of staff changes in which standards and behaviour declined markedly. A pupil who said, 'the school is getting better all the time' has summed this school up well. Good leadership and management, with a sharp focus on raising standards and improving behaviour, has been successful. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The swiftness and intelligence with which the relatively new headteacher has tackled key weaknesses and the effectiveness with which staff and governors carry out their roles has put the school in a good position to continue to improve. The school has the full confidence of parents. However, although detailed plans are in place, some long-term issues, such as ensuring higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 are given sufficient work, remain areas for improvement. Since the last inspection, the pattern of improvement has been erratic. The impetus given by the current headteacher has raised the pace significantly and improvement overall is satisfactory. Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are satisfactory overall and some aspects are good. The provision in Reception is good where strong teaching and a well thought-out curriculum help children make good progress and reach expected standards. After a period of decline, standards overall are improving and are now broadly average in Year 6. Pupils do better in English than in mathematics because teaching is more effective and the work is more challenging. As the school has identified, pupils' ability to solve problems lags behind other elements of mathematics. Higher attaining pupils are still not doing well enough in Years 1 and 2 because not enough is expected of them. Pupils enjoy school, they behave well and get on well with each other. When work allows, they determinedly set about solving problems, using imagination and initiative. The school is turning its attention to the curriculum and work still remains to be done to make it interesting enough and to ensure pupils use key literacy, numeracy and computing skills in demanding ways. The school takes good care of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities get the help they need and much thought has gone into ensuring that those who are new to the school settle in quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 more demanding work. - Improve pupils' abilities to solve mathematical problems. - Make work in all subjects more thought provoking and systematically plan for the purposeful application of literacy, numeracy and computing skills in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Despite pockets of good achievement in the school, pupils' achievements overall are satisfactory and standards are broadly average by Year 6. Standards are higher than they have been for some time and are improving. Good teaching in Reception and a

well planned curriculum has led to children making good progress in reading, writing, number work and in their personal development. The vast majority reach expected standards by the time they start Year 1. In recent years, the school has found it hard to capitalise on this good start to school. In other year groups, higher attaining pupils in particular did not progress quickly enough and standards declined. Decisive leadership has, after a period of considerable disruption to staffing, calmly put the school back on track and more challenging targets are set and met. The first signs of better progress, evident in 2005, have been built on this year, especially in English. Test results for Year 6 for 2006, unpublished at the time of the inspection, have risen considerably from 2005. In English in particular, considerably more pupils now exceed expected standards. However, the school's own tracking data and work in pupils' books show that improvement has not been as rapid in mathematics through the school or more generally in Years 1 and 2. Here, too little is still expected of more able pupils. Improvements to ways in which the school tracks pupils' progress ensure that those whose learning would benefit from support receive prompt help. Last year very few fell short of reaching average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has done much of late to improve pupils' experience of school, resulting in personal development being good. This includes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Attendance rates have gone from below to above average. This is due, in part, to closer monitoring of absence and tangible rewards, but in essence it is because pupils enjoy school more. Pupils have been given a say in the school and exercise this responsibility well. The influential school council was instrumental in choosing the varied equipment that helps make playtimes happy, sociable and energetic occasions. As one girl said playtimes 'used to be right boring' but now they are 'really fun.' Older pupils readily help younger ones and those new to the school. Incidents of poor behaviour have plummeted and behaviour is now good. Pupils say that there is no bullying. Pupils strive to achieve the plethora of rewards for good work and behaviour. Pupils are yet to commit to eating healthily, and crisp eaters are equally as prevalent as fruit eaters at break times. They understand how to stay safe, through lessons such as those on drug misuse and road safety. Pupils show that, when given the opportunity, they can be creative and determined in their efforts to solve problems, to work in teams and to craft their own ideas. They contribute to the wider community through fund raising for charity. However, pupils' knowledge of life in multicultural of Britain is very sketchy. Their satisfactory academic skills and good social development give them a sound foundation for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The results of whole-school training on encouraging good behaviour are seen in the positive ways in which teachers interact with pupils. Recent work on accurately assessing how well pupils are doing and on sharpening planning is paying dividends. The disruption caused to pupils' learning by changing schools is minimised as teachers quickly get to grips with what pupils already know and no time is lost in moving learning along. Key skills such as literacy and numeracy are taught with clarity and pupils are increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve. For example, in Year 5, 'top tips' for writing poems gave pupils a tick list by which to measure their efforts. This typifies a growing sense of ambition in teaching, especially in English. However, excitement in learning is not yet commonplace in Years 1 and 2. Work here is often too easy for higher attaining pupils who are rarely required to write at length or with flair. The growing sense of enterprise in teaching is yet to be applied to mathematics. Pupils are given some investigational work. However, such work is the exception rather than the rule. Teachers make too much use of uninteresting worksheets aimed at practising key skills rather than the thoughtful use of these skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's satisfactory curriculum succeeds in helping pupils acquire essential skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT). Teams of staff are beginning to explore how aspects such as creativity can be threaded through subjects but work is at an early stage to show impact. The curriculum does not yet succeed in requiring pupils to apply newly acquired literacy, numeracy and computing skills in thought-provoking ways when working in other subjects. Too much of what pupils do in history and geography, for example, consists of short pieces of factual writing or of filling in worksheets, which restrict pupils' thinking. The children in Reception benefit from a good curriculum that balances learning indoors and outside, and child-led and adult-led learning. Pupils' personal development is aided by good opportunities for them to talk about various moral and social issues. Pupils seize every opportunity to take part in the good range of clubs that are on offer. The take-up of these has recently increased significantly and is high. Pupils say that the increase in school trips help make school more interesting.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Standards of care are good. Staff have pupils' best interests at heart and pupils say they feel listened to. Careful attention has been given to settling in the constant stream of pupils who join the school. 'Buddies' are assigned and prompt and regular

assessment of academic performance ensures that transition is very smooth. As one boy said he quickly felt he 'belonged'. Careful tracking of progress leads to swift intervention for pupils who have learning difficulties. The teaching assistants are well deployed to support these pupils. Recent training has addressed gaps in procedures for child protection. Staff are now more expert and clearer about school policy and their place within it. This is indicative of a school that underpins its caring attitude with effective whole school procedures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. As one parent astutely pointed out, 'I feel the school and the atmosphere have greatly improved since the arrival of the new headteacher.' A number of parents also echo these views and are in no doubt that the school is much better than it was a short time ago. The headteacher's quiet authority and energy have steered the school through a difficult time. He has raised morale and improved the leadership of others. All in the school are working hard and share a common purpose. Governors, several of whom are new to the post, know the school well and join with the headteacher and other staff in moving it forward. The headteacher wasted no time weighing up the school. Regular classroom visits have given him an accurate view of teaching and learning. Parents', pupils' and staff views have been sought and national performance data analysed carefully. He has injected rigour and adjusted priorities so that the right areas for improvement are being tackled. Self-evaluation is good. Close partnership with the local authority has been used as a springboard to bring about a raft of recent changes, for example, in the way pupils' progress is tracked and behaviour managed. Latent leadership qualities of other staff are being successfully channelled and coordinated at a whole school level. Teachers report feeling enthusiastic and empowered in finding out for themselves how elements of the school for which they have responsibility are doing. In many instances they do this well. As the headteacher said, he initially had to take a 'front seat' in implementing change but is now increasingly able to take a 'back seat' as others in the school take a lead. A recent track record of success gives confidence that the school can 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?	3	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	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	3	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	3	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

Thank you for your help when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my visit because everyone was so helpful and friendly. It was like being part of one big happy family. I would like to share with you what I thought about your school. Your headteacher and staff think about your needs a lot. You told me, and I noticed for myself, that the school is getting better every day. The school council has put a lot of thought into making playtimes fun. I could see how much you enjoyed these times, how well you got on with each other and how much you take care of your new equipment. I noticed that although some of you eat fruit to keep you healthy, a lot of you still choose to eat food like crisps, which you told me is not as good for you. You go on lot of trips and many of you take part in the clubs on offer. All of this makes school life fun. You also work hard in lessons and know a lot about how to improve your work. You told me how much you like work that makes you think. I saw this for myself in some of your English lessons and was impressed by some of your writing. I have asked the school to make sure work in mathematics makes you think more and that work in Years 1 and 2 is more interesting for those of you who find it too easy. I have also asked the school to think about making sure that some of the work done in subjects such as history and geography is more interesting. Thank you once again for making my time at you school such a pleasant time. Good luck in all that you do.