



Pitsford Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121850
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281114
Inspection dates 22 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector John Paull RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Moulton Road
School category	Community		Pitsford
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Northampton, Northamptonshire NN6 9AU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01604 880 866
Number on roll	60	Fax number	01604 880 866
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Shane Atherton
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sonja Henman

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 22 November 2005 - 22 November 2005	Inspection number 281114
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pitsford Primary School is in a village on the outskirts of Northampton. All pupils in the school are of White British origin. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is very low although, as hot meals are not provided, actual numbers may be higher. Socio-economic circumstances are close to average. The number of pupils identified with special educational needs is broadly average, although none has a statement of entitlement. Attainment on entry is also around average.

Just recently, the school has passed through a period of considerable change in its staff and governors.

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 confirms the school's view that it provides a satisfactory education and that sound value for money is achieved. Recent improvement is good, an opinion that parents overwhelmingly share. Their view is typified by those who commented that many rapid changes in senior personnel caused them to lose confidence, but that they now feel reassured by the determination and calm approach of the acting headteacher. The inspection endorses this view. Confidence in the school is now rising, along with standards. The 2005 national tests in Year 6 indicate above average standards, especially in mathematics and science. Pupils' personal development is good and includes outstanding behaviour. This feature makes a very positive contribution to pupils' good progress, although multicultural education is a weakness. The staff are working together well with parents, governors and the local authority, following the acting headteacher's strong lead. Teaching and learning are good. However, some detailed plans on which teaching is based are out of date and do not take account of the latest national emphasis on linking knowledge and skills in different subjects. Much work has been done to monitor teaching, planning and test results to base improvements on solid information. This work is now well managed, although not yet established long enough to be routine.

Improvement since the inspection of 2000 has been satisfactory, although spasmodic. Information and communication technology (ICT) and communications with parents are much improved. Strengths in care and support have been built on and the quality of provision and children's achievement in the Reception year are good. However, academic standards declined before their present strong improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and carried out routinely, so action taken to tackle weaknesses is fully followed through
- carry out a review of those subjects where schemes of work have not been updated for some time and ensure aspects of multicultural education are included in all subject areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The most recent national test results and standards seen during the inspection indicate that pupils are now making good progress. It follows below average results in 2003 and 2004, when standards were particularly poor in English. The turnaround is remarkable and shows that challenging targets are now being met. The school's own tracking of pupils' progress suggests that even better results are likely in the next couple of years.

The determined leadership of the acting headteacher, supported by hard-working staff, is the main reason for this significant turnaround in performance. Considerable monitoring of pupils' progress to establish what was going wrong has given rise to

effective remedies. Where gaps in pupils' knowledge were found, new targets were set, teaching was adapted to meet them, and learning has benefited strongly. In science especially, good knowledge of what pupils needed to concentrate on to raise their performance was used to good effect.

Standards lower down the school are also rising. This is reflected in test results at the end of Year 2 and in the good progress made by pupils in Year 1. Children in their Reception year are also well catered for. Although they are in a mixed-age class with Years 1 and 2, an effective, qualified nursery nurse understands their particular needs well. Nearly all of them are on course to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the year. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Their targets match their needs and their progress towards these targets is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception year want to emulate the older pupils in their mixed-age class and quickly develop good attitudes to learning. Pupils throughout the school often show outstanding behaviour in the classroom. They enjoy their work and are determined to do their best, particularly in timed tests, or when responding to a challenge, such as the headteacher's request for finding out about South Africa. Pupils are mature and caring towards each other and keep up very good relationships, which ensures that the school is well ordered and a happy place. Pupils themselves say that bullying is not an issue. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. It contributes to recently improved attainment and progress, because pupils understand the importance of working together socially and appreciate the importance of studying their environment to make it better. Pupils contribute well to school rules and they take responsibility through the School Council. Understanding of healthy eating has been promoted, although the lack of school meals allows the school little direct opportunity to influence what is actually eaten. Visits and visitors extend pupils' learning beyond their village community. However, education about the cultures of people from backgrounds and countries that are different from pupils' own is not sufficiently well developed.

Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils with 100% attendance are recognised on the school's Roll of Honour, which acts as a good incentive. Nevertheless, a small minority has a poor record, and the number of holidays taken during the school year remains high. The upturn in standards in literacy and numeracy is now equipping pupils well in the basic skills for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A couple of years ago, it was identified that teaching and learning were not good enough. The departure of an experienced teacher, coupled with frequent changes in senior staff, contributed to this picture. Pupils' learning suffered and standards dropped. The present acting headteacher then introduced several remedies, based on observations and feedback, strong management of performance and the development of strong partnerships with the local authority and the involvement of governors.

Teaching and learning are now good. Each class is relatively small, so teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils very well and are sensitive to signs that pupils have not understood or are lacking the confidence to progress. As a result, teachers adapt planning quickly to meet changing circumstances, according to pupils' ages and prior knowledge. This pattern includes the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and the young children in the Reception class, who benefit from the knowledgeable support of their nursery nurse. The use of monitoring and assessment in the school's mixed-age classes has recently improved considerably, adding an increasingly systematic dimension to this picture. Learning is therefore well focused on what is needed to help pupils develop skills and to build knowledge as they move through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers provide an interesting curriculum. All subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and other statutory elements are planned satisfactorily. Whilst many subjects, especially literacy and numeracy, have good plans of work, provision in a few - art and design and history are examples - is not fully up to date with the latest ideas about linking the body of knowledge and skills across the curriculum. This means that opportunities for cross-curricular work are sometimes missed. The previous weakness in ICT has been addressed and the use of interactive whiteboards is a good feature. In the Reception class, the curriculum in all areas of learning meets the needs of children well.

The school offers pupils a good variety of enrichment activities that help their learning. They participate enthusiastically in a wide range of lunchtime clubs. These clubs are often run by Year 6 pupils, who are full of anecdotes and praise for the achievements of their younger members. Visits and visitors further add to pupils' experience and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A parent governor commented that the school's motto, 'Pitsford is a caring and sharing school', has always been its aim, but that she now believes '...it is realised'. Care of

pupils is indeed good and everyone is now sharing a common purpose of providing strong guidance and support. The inclusion of vulnerable pupils in the school's good family atmosphere is strong, which ensures their happiness and positive contribution. Attendance procedures are rigorous and well focused on improving a previous rise in absences. With parents' support, behaviour management is especially strong and adds to purposeful learning. Health and safety procedures are developing well and there are no significant areas of concern. Child protection arrangements are in line with local guidelines. The assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupils are satisfactory and have contributed well to recent improvement in pupils' achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties have action plans that are tailored to their individual needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher is proving to be a very good leader. Parents, staff, governors and pupils alike all report that they feel united in a purposeful and sustainable drive to reverse an unstable recent past. The inspection has confirmed this view. Spasmodic improvement since the last inspection has been turned into ongoing, secure progress. The determination of governors to keep abreast of developments is a strong contributory factor. The chair and vice-chair are well informed and are thinking strategically about what has been most effective in bringing about change. Their purpose is to work with the acting headteacher to build good practice firmly into the school's future. The impact of this drive is very obvious in the good quality of teaching and the sharp recent rise in standards and progress through the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what is being done to eliminate any underachievement.

Staffing is more stable than has been the case recently, which contributes more effectively to the management of subjects. Provision for special educational needs is sound and coordination of work in the Reception year is strong.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the school has made good progress recently. It is well placed to improve further, because self-evaluation has proved accurate and effective, concentrating on a manageable programme of key improvements.

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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	3	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	3	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	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?	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	3	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	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

Pitsford Primary School Moulton Road Pitsford Northamptonshire NN6 9AU

22 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for being so welcoming when Mr Wood and I visited your school. We think that you are making good progress. We were very pleased to see how hard you and your teachers are working to help you achieve this. We thoroughly enjoyed being in your school and coming to your lessons. We thought that you behaved outstandingly well. We especially enjoyed chatting with you about your work. You were all very helpful and polite.

What we like most about your school

- Your acting headteacher and the staff are working very successfully to help you reach the expected levels of work.
- You work very sensibly in your lessons.
- Many of you enjoy school and you do a lot of things to help it run smoothly – ‘Bring a Brush Day’ sounded very productive, as well as great fun, and the buddies and school council are other examples.
- Your teachers help you to feel safe and sound.

What we have asked your acting headteacher, the staff and the school’s governors to do next

- To make sure that they check everything about the school all the time, including your progress, so any weaknesses can be put right straight away.
- To see that what they teach you is fully up to date with latest ideas, including education about the cultures of people from backgrounds and countries that are different from your own.

We hope that you will always be proud of your school and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely John William Paull Lead Inspector