

The Ellis Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106638
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	287570
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Horner
Headteacher	Mrs Pam Randall
Date of previous school inspection	15 July 2002
School address	School Street Hemingfield Barnsley South Yorkshire S73 0PS
Telephone number	01226 753383
Fax number	01226 753612

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school serves the village of Hemingfield, an area of mixed social and economic circumstance to the south of Barnsley. Almost all pupils are of a White British heritage. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, with statements of special educational need, and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are below average. The school holds the Silver Healthy Schools award. Recently it has undergone significant disruption; because of a full on-site rebuild, the school has lost its fields, half of its playground, and many of its resources. A new headteacher was appointed in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Ellis is a satisfactory school with several good features, which provides its pupils with outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It gives satisfactory value for money. Parents recognise the problems caused by the disruption of the past year; their views are typified by this comment: 'during the build, the school has had many difficulties to face, but has still managed to develop our children's education'. Inspectors agree with this view.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards below those normally expected for their age. Because teaching is good with much that is exemplary children learn well and make good and sometimes rapid progress towards the expected learning goals. By the time children enter Year 1, standards are broadly average and they remain so to the end of Year 2. By Year 6, standards are above average but because progress is inconsistent year on year, overall pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, because of the good care, guidance and support that they receive from all adults. The school pays very close attention to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is reflected in the Christian mission of the school where pupils show their consideration for others through unfailing politeness and good manners. Spirituality is particularly strong, as seen in the enthusiastic involvement of every pupil in creating a tapestry conveying the 180-year history of the school before it moves to its new building in September 2007.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory; however, there are inconsistencies in the progress made by pupils. Some lessons are outstanding. In these lessons, and in very good lessons, pupils become engaged in learning promptly and enthusiastically, and respond readily to teachers' high expectations. They focus on their tasks, which meet their needs well. They learn quickly, and in consequence make good and sometimes outstanding progress. In other lessons, teachers talk too much and do not require pupils to think for themselves. Because the demands on pupils are lower in these lessons, their progress slows.

The clear-minded, persistent and knowledgeable headteacher has quickly gained an accurate picture of the school. She has taken prompt and well founded actions to address weaknesses. An effective assessment system has been created. Issues identified for improvement at the last inspection have largely been addressed. For example, standards in English, which were too low, are now much higher, although more remains to be done. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory because middle managers and governors have only recently begun to take on full accountability for their responsibilities. Under the guidance of the headteacher, staff morale has remained high, and teaching and support staff have maintained a clear focus on maintaining the opportunities pupils have to learn. For these reasons, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in English, mathematics and science across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards below those normally expected for their age, with their knowledge and understanding of the world and their communication skills being the weakest aspects of their learning. Because provision is good, children get off to a flying start, and this good progress continues through Year 1. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. However, from the end of Year 1 to the end of Year 6, progress is variable because teaching and learning are inconsistent. This is why pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, though some aspects are outstanding, such as pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is only average despite the school's best efforts. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, but a very small number are ambivalent about the challenge that lessons offer them and say that this affects their enjoyment of school. Members of the school council are pleased with the impact they have had in stimulating fundraising initiatives such as 'Pink Day' and a fruit tuck shop, and in influencing behaviour management strategies. They understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise, and are looking forward to the restoration of their playground and to having more space for sports activities. Pupils feel safe in school and 'The Ellis Playtime Rules' are a direct result of pupils, who had concerns over bullying, working together in assemblies to improve behaviour in the small playground. They get on well with each other, and enjoy activities where they work in small groups or with partners. Pupils carry out responsibilities such as being play leaders conscientiously, and are prepared to share new experiences and learning. For example, a group of pupils who had visited Escape, a local adventure centre, prepared a presentation of their activities for the whole school, vividly depicting their 'nerve-wracking, action-packed and exciting experience'. This capability, together with their above average basic skills, prepares them well for the next stage in their education.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of contributing to community life, and excel in supporting local events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies in the progress made by pupils. Generally, lessons are well organised and teachers make good use of restricted resources to help pupils understand new ideas. In the very best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and enjoyment. For example, Foundation Stage children use play-based activities to develop language and learning across subjects. In Year 4, when classifying and exploring the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes in a mathematics lesson, pupils completed the task independently, and they shared the excitement of their learning with the rest of the class. However, in other lessons, learning is slower because pupils spend too much time listening to long instructions, which slows their progress. Classroom assistants work closely with teachers, playing a significant

part in pupils' progress, though the skills of higher level teaching assistants are not deployed evenly across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The learning of basic skills in literacy and numeracy has a high profile and is reinforced well within many subjects. A good programme of personal, social and health education is brought to life when pupils participate in emergency safety training such as 'Crucial Crew', and their awareness of the dangers of substance abuse is raised through the 'All Geared Up' programme. Pupils follow a good programme of sporting activities through links with the local secondary school, and they are conscious of the importance of exercise for health. During the building work, the school has actively sought opportunities for pupils to exercise off site. Effective curriculum planning supports the transition of children from the Foundation Stage into the main school, but this is not always the case as pupils move between year groups. Good initiatives have been introduced to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are gifted or talented. Class work is now enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, specialist teachers, educational visits and visitors to school. Opportunities for using information and communication technology are restricted because of the present school building, but there are plans to improve this situation when the school moves to its new home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures are thorough and meet requirements. The newly formed breakfast club offers pupils a healthy and active start to the day. Pupils feel safe in school because they can see that staff want to ensure their safety. They are confident that there will always be someone in the school they can talk to if they have worries. Parents consider that 'staff are always friendly and approachable' and that they 'are happy with the support they receive.' Importantly, the school has worked hard to make sure of pupils' safety during the recent construction work.

Foundation Stage children are well prepared for school by a number of visits, and Year 6 pupils join with other schools in a confidence-building event at the World Challenge Centre before their move to secondary school. New systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are good, and provide an effective method for identifying when pupils may not have fully understood new work. Well embedded procedures, such as the regular use of booklets to show individual pupils' progress against their targets, offer a solid core of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who are in need of additional support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quietly effective headteacher leads by good example, and has ensured that the school continues to function smoothly during the building work. The recently implemented whole-school tracking system, and regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, means that she knows the school well. Development plans contain appropriate priorities, and recent actions have brought about improvements in helping pupils know more precisely what they need to do to improve their work. The headteacher has encouraged subject leaders and other middle

managers to take on more responsibility for the quality of work in their areas. Governors are supportive and committed and are prepared to learn about their roles, but they are not yet fully in a position to challenge the work of the school. Therefore more remains to be done, because the full effect of the school's new initiatives has yet to be seen in the progress pupils are making. However, teamwork among all staff is strong, and characterised by a positive and inclusive atmosphere throughout the school where support is given generously and freely. The school has a good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were impressed with your good behaviour and friendliness, and we particularly noted the outstandingly considerate attitudes you show to each other.

We feel that your school is satisfactory overall, and that despite the disruption caused by preparations for the move to the new building, you make satisfactory progress in lessons.

Here are some of the other good things we found about your school.

- Your headteacher sets a good example for others to follow.
- All the adults work hard to make sure that school is a safe and happy place, and that you are well cared for.
- You enjoy taking on responsibility, both when working independently in class and when working together to improve behaviour at playtime.
- You have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and live healthily.

We have asked the school to work on some things to make the school even better:

- improve your progress in English, mathematics and science by making sure that everyone in class has work that is neither too hard nor too easy
- make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones in the school.

You can help by continuing to try your very best in every lesson.

With best wishes for good luck in the future.