



Pulford C of E Voluntary Aided Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109619
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288451
Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Keith Sadler

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Pulford Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Leighton Buzzard |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 | | Bedfordshire LU7 1AB |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01525 372188 |
| Number on roll (school) | 150 | Fax number | 01525 378984 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr Stephen Lakin |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Jim Meager |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2 July 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pulford is a small, very oversubscribed lower school that serves children from Reception to Year 4. It is located in the centre of Leighton Buzzard. Pupils come from the town and surrounding areas. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few children are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils are from a mix of economic backgrounds and the number entitled to free school meals is low. There is an average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Although the full range of ability is represented in the intake, overall attainment on entry is at expected levels.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pulford is a good school where pupils achieve well and attain above average standards. But this is not a school that focuses solely on developing pupils' academic abilities. There is an overwhelming sense of care and teamwork and the school's aim to develop a strong sense of family is realised exceptionally well in practice. As one parent stated, 'The Pulford family all work together and have fun.' The staff strive to ensure that pupils are included in the wide range of opportunities available. In consequence, pupils love school, have very positive attitudes to learning and behave well. One parent even reported that all her son wanted for Christmas was to go back to school! Due to the good provision, pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. In particular, they say that their children are safe and well cared for, enjoy school and that they make good progress because the quality of teaching is good. The inspection confirms all these views.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation class because the teaching is of the highest quality and provision is excellent. They settle quickly, are confident and very enthusiastic to learn. As a result, almost all children meet the expected goals by the time that they enter Year 1 and a minority exceed them. Due to the effective teaching and learning in all other classes, pupils make good progress and achieve well. In the tests for seven-year-olds, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the time that they leave the school, at the age of nine, standards are well above expectations, particularly in mathematics. Although all groups of pupils make good progress, the progress of the most able is not as rapid as it could be. This is because the school has not yet developed a clear strategy for the support of gifted and talented pupils. Staff know their pupils well, and their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is tracked well. However, pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is not sufficiently well checked and this limits achievement, particularly for the most able pupils.

The school's success owes much to the headteacher, who parents agree is 'pivotal to the school'. He has a clear vision and is determined to ensure that the school's aims are met. He is deeply respected by governors, parents, staff and pupils. He has steered the school well since the last inspection. In that time, the quality of teaching and learning has strengthened, standards have improved and the curriculum is now much enhanced. He is ably supported by both the deputy headteacher and other members of staff, who all contribute well to the school's development. Curriculum coordinators have a thorough knowledge of how the school provides for pupils in their subjects and how well pupils are doing. In consequence, school evaluation is of good quality and there is significant capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the provision and extend the achievement of gifted and talented pupils.
- Improve the arrangements for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the school, except in the Foundation class, where progress is excellent. In consequence, standards in tests at age seven have been consistently above average for the past few years and are on an upward trend. The previous weaknesses in writing have been successfully addressed and standards in writing at the end of Year 4 now parallel those for reading and are significantly above expectations. Standards in mathematics are well above average, which reflects the strength of teaching and learning in this subject. As a result of the good, well-targeted provision, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress against the targets set for them. Although all groups of pupils achieve well, the progress of the most able pupils is not boosted sufficiently, particularly in reading, writing and ICT. Standards in ICT are at least at the expected level and pupils are skilled in making use of ICT in many subjects, but the lack of clear information about pupils' progress limits achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is good although the school is concerned about a small minority of pupils who arrive late. Pupils are proud of their school, describing it as 'a church school', a 'music school' and 'an eco school'. They are aware of the importance of eating healthy foods and the benefits of exercise. Assemblies engage pupils well and make a considerable contribution to their good spiritual, moral and social and cultural development. They know about the importance of helping others by raising funds for a wide range of local, national and international causes. They thoroughly enjoy taking responsibility and make a positive contribution to the smooth running of the school. They assist with lunchtime arrangements, assembly and by becoming playground friends. In addition, they play an important role in the school's eco council. Hence, pupils make a good start in developing their roles as members of the school and wider community and this prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships between adults and pupils are central to the good teaching and learning. They support the development of positive attitudes to learning and ensure that pupils are fully engaged and are keen to do well. This is particularly the case in the Foundation class, where children thrive in their learning due to high quality questioning that makes the children think. In addition, the staff have created an outstanding atmosphere of support. Teachers generally plan lessons well and make

sure that activities are organised to meet the needs of most groups of pupils. However, on occasion, teachers' plans do not sufficiently extend the most able. Teaching assistants make a particularly positive contribution to the pupils' learning. They have a high level of expertise and support pupils well. They lead small groups effectively and ensure that all pupils are fully involved and understand what they are doing. There have been considerable improvements in homework and marking since the last inspection. These are now of good quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It covers all the required subjects, with particular emphasis on the basic skills of English and mathematics. It also provides a good range of interesting experiences. Weaknesses in science at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed. There is now a good range of extra-curricular and other additional activities. These include a variety of clubs that encourage pupils to pursue an active and healthy lifestyle and to develop an interest in the arts. In addition, a programme of interesting visits and visitors enlivens pupils' learning. Many of these experiences support the school's focus on raising pupils' global awareness through a variety of links, including by e-mail, with other schools worldwide. Music is a particular strength. This takes advantage of teachers' expertise and enhances the curriculum considerably, for example through assemblies, and contributes well to pupils' spiritual development. The school has yet to explore ways of improving provision for more able pupils and pupils with particular skills and talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe and secure environment. Pupils are well cared for and the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants makes an important contribution to their all-round development. Pupils acting as playground friends and the use of the rainbow bench at break times provide opportunities for older pupils to help younger ones. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, child protection and health and safety are securely in place. In reading, writing and mathematics, teachers set individual targets and track pupils' progress carefully to help them move forward in their learning. However, in ICT pupils do not get this sort of guidance. Individual learning plans provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties, particularly in literacy, as well as clear and helpful advice for teaching assistants and parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There have been significant improvements in the quality of leadership and management since the last inspection. The curriculum is now effectively managed. The contribution of subject coordinators to the pupils' progress is now excellent and there has been a rigorous focus on improving standards. In consequence, the school has built successfully

on the average standards that were reported in the last inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement. Everyone matters in this school and teamwork is one of the keys to its success. Strategic planning for improvement is thorough. The school maintains good partnerships, such as with the local primary school network and higher education providers who place large numbers of trainees in the school. There are good systems to check how well the school is doing and all staff contribute well to the evaluation of improvement projects. Governors play an effective role in the school's development. They support the school well and take an active and positive role in its strategic development.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 1 |
| 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

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

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| 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? | 2 |
| 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.

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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

20 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Pulford C of E Lower School, Pulford Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 1AB

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit because everyone was so welcoming and friendly. I would like to share with you what we thought.

These are the things that we think are best about your school.

- The staff help you to love school, to enjoy being with your friends and to be very keen learners.
- Everyone, including a number of you, told us that you have a good headteacher. We agree!
- Teaching is good and all the adults take extremely good care of you so that you make good progress and stay safe.
- You make good progress in your learning.

We know that everyone wants to do even better and we have suggested two things that we think will help.

- Your teachers need to make sure that those of you that find learning easier do even better in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Your teachers need to make sure that they check how well you are progressing in ICT to help everyone to make more progress.

You can help by continuing to work hard! We are confident that you will continue to enjoy your school and we wish you well in the future.

With best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector