



Pilton the Bluecoat Church of England Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113447
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289631
Inspection dates 9–10 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Lilly

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Abbey Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Barnstaple
Age range of pupils	7–11		EX31 1JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01271 345952
Number on roll (school)	253	Fax number	01271 323195
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vernon Ross
		Headteacher	Paul Mulligan
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	9–10 January 2007	289631

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school. It is on the same site as the infant school that provides most of its pupils. Most pupils are of White British origin, although the proportion from different backgrounds is rising and the school now has a small number for whom English is not their first language. It has fewer pupils with special educational needs than the national average but the number is increasing as the school's reputation for helping these pupils spreads. The current headteacher took up post in September 2004, following a period of considerable instability in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pilton the Blue Coat is a good and improving school. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher turned the school around after a period when standards had declined to a very low level. Following his appointment, the quality of education improved substantially and pupils now make good progress. Standards are average for the older pupils. They have had a lot of catching up to do but their achievement since they joined the school is now satisfactory. Younger pupils are forging ahead, achieving well and are on course to reach above average standards by the time they leave.

The determined senior managers and a close-knit and ambitious staff fully support the headteacher's vision and direction. Rigorous self-evaluation guides efficient and effective management, and is based upon strong values, for example, that every child matters and that partnership with parents is the bedrock of good education. The school as a whole, staff and pupils, has a joy in learning and an excitement not only in what has been achieved but also in knowing what can still be achieved. The pupils make these strong values and aspirations their own. Consequently, their personal development is outstanding. As several staff said, 'We nurture the children and they nurture us'. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and, as a result, pupils feel safe and valued as individuals. They learn well how to care for their own health and safety and they play their full part in the school and wider community. They gain the skills and maturity that form strong foundations for their futures. Behaviour and attendance are good.

Teaching and learning are good, as is the curriculum. Together these create an enjoyment in learning and a shared commitment to its importance. Good assessment enables teachers to evaluate the pupils' progress and to rectify gaps in their learning. This leads to outstanding guidance for pupils through one-to-one discussions with teachers. In lessons, however, teachers do not always make it clear enough what pupils at each level of ability should have learned by the end of the lesson, and this sometimes holds the most able pupils back. Teachers make insufficient use of information and communication technology, such as interactive whiteboards, to support learning. The good leadership and management of the school and the committed staff, which have secured such marked improvement in the recent past, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to continue to improve. Helping it to realise its ambitions, the school is supported by a strong governing body, strong partnership with other organisations and agencies and a parent body that is fully behind the school. As one parent among many said, 'There has been a vast improvement in the past three years. I can only praise the school for the work they do.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Make clearer to pupils of different levels of ability what they need to learn by the end of each lesson.
- Ensure teachers make better use of information and communication technology to support learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. This represents a considerable improvement since 2005, when the Key Stage 2 test results were very low and the pupils badly underachieved. Stemming from a significant improvement in the quality of their education, pupils now make good progress throughout the school. Test results improved substantially in 2006 and the current attainment of older pupils is average in English, mathematics and science. Mathematics has been the slowest to improve but better assessment of learning in this subject now identifies the gaps in pupils' learning and these weaknesses are immediately rectified. Consequently, current attainment in mathematics has improved to broadly average. The catching up by the older pupils, who entered like other years with broadly average standards, means that their achievement during their time in the school is now satisfactory. The younger pupils, who have not had to experience the weaker education provided by the school in the past, are achieving well and are set to achieve higher than average standards by the time they leave. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, although there is scope to stretch the more-able pupils further. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well supported. They acquire English quickly and make good progress in their other work. Pupils are making good progress in other subjects. For example, much work in art and design is outstanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school greatly and this shows in their very positive relationships and attitudes towards others. Behaviour is good because pupils know what good behaviour is and why it is important. They show very caring and perceptive attitudes, for example, when helping pupils at a local special school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflecting the inspiring role models provided by staff. They become mature and independent young people, who fully involve themselves in and contribute to the opportunities the school offers. This involvement ranges from very high take-up of extra-curricular activities to highly responsible work as peer mediators or school councillors. They take the guidance of staff very seriously and this is a key reason why they are making good progress. They have a good understanding of how to remain safe and healthy. They recognise the skills they will need in the future and develop them well. Attendance is good, but would be better still if families did not take holidays in term-time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers generate an excitement in learning and most pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to contribute. They try hard and think deeply about how to improve their work. They collaborate well with each other and adults, for example, the skilled teaching assistants. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. Even so, these objectives are often for the class as a whole. Teachers do not make clear enough to pupils of different abilities what they must show they have learned by the end of the lesson. This tends to hold back the most able pupils.

Assessment evaluates accurately how well pupils are learning and identifies where it is insecure. The impact of the much improved teaching has been most evident in English and science, but the impact is now clear in mathematics. Teachers model the way good oral language aids thinking and pupils use these skills well to think things through for themselves. Teachers do not always make full use of the information and communication technology available to support learning, for example by using the interactive whiteboards they have in their classrooms.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Literacy and numeracy skills have high priority. French is taught in all years. A wide range and variety of after-school clubs, visits and outdoor activities enrich the pupils' experience and learning considerably. The school makes good use of its links with schools in other parts of the world. Topics in science, history and geography are taught in short but concentrated blocks that involve pupils deeply. These experiences are often used in English lessons to provide interesting and relevant subject matter for writing letters, instructions or accounts. Less able pupils are helped to understand topics at their own speed through extra support and adapted materials. There are not always enough opportunities in lessons for the ablest pupils to tackle harder ideas, although very able pupils are sometimes moved up to a higher group so that the challenge is greater, for example, in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Systems for safeguarding pupils are exceptionally rigorous. Care and support are extremely effective because each pupil is highly valued and considered as an individual with unique needs. Assessment and tracking of personal development support this very well. The school provides an outstanding environment in which to develop as people and achieve well-being. Expectations are clear and success immediately recognised and celebrated. Specific aspects of the curriculum enable pupils to deal with their emotions, and they value these sessions highly. When the pupils' emotions overwhelm them, whether anger or

sadness, the school provides a quiet area in which to calm down. Once calm, they are welcomed back without negative recriminations. The school ensures pupils learn how to be safe and healthy and gain the self-esteem that comes from playing an important part in the life of the school. The systems for target setting (Target Passports), supported by one-to-one discussions (Bubble sessions) with teachers, are outstanding, although there is sometimes not a strong enough link between these and learning objectives in lessons. Attendance is very strongly promoted.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher reversed a serious decline in standards and created a school that is rapidly improving. This leadership is effectively shared by senior managers and increasingly by other staff. A considerable strength is the way in which all staff are and feel involved in identifying what needs to improve and in the planning that brings this improvement about. Performance management sets clear objectives to be met and effective training and development are provided. Teachers are observed and observe each other teach, and these observations lead to helpful guidance on how to improve. A very good school improvement plan grows from accurate self-evaluation. It is strongly focused on meeting challenging targets for the academic progress and personal development of the pupils. This underpins effective and efficient management.

Strong values and Christian beliefs are at the heart of the school and outstanding assemblies enact them. As with other activities these are evaluated so as to improve. The views of pupils and parents are widely sought and are acted upon. Similarly, the school uses partnership with others, for example, the infant, secondary and special schools, to improve the learning and experience of the pupils. The strong governing body is highly involved with the life and work of the school and underpins improvement. Staff are rightly proud of what they have achieved and are ambitious to become outstanding. Management, however, does not specify clearly enough what constitutes the outstanding teaching that produces outstanding learning. A well considered longer-term strategy outlines future direction, and recognises the need to bring the various initiatives together. It includes, for example, making the curriculum even more relevant for the most able, making better use of resources now available, developing partnerships further and bringing together guidance to individual pupils with matching objectives in lessons.

Inspection judgements

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

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 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	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1
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?	1

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

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

Pilton the Bluecoat Church of England Junior School, Abbey Road, Pilton, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 1JU

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our two days with you very much, especially talking to you and being with you in your lessons. Your singing in assemblies was marvellous.

You go to a good school and you are very much a part of what makes it good. You told us how much you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. Your headteacher, staff and governors run the school well. They are determined to provide you with only the best, working very hard to make the school better and better each day. The school and your families work closely together to help you. You are working well in lessons and make good progress because you have good teachers. The good curriculum gives you many interesting and important things to learn that you will need for your future lives. You say that you find what you learn interesting and fun. We think you are extremely well cared for and get the help you need. You told us that you find talking about your targets with your teachers very helpful. You get on with others and care for them extremely well. You behave well and are very polite, and your attendance is good. You become thoughtful and mature young people. You told us you liked, in particular, the many activities after school, that adults value you as individuals and the way you can help improve your school through the school council and by helping other children.

To become an even better school, we have asked your teachers to:

- make sure they make it clearer what pupils of different abilities need to learn by the end of each lesson
- make more use of information and communication technology to help you learn, for example, the interactive whiteboards.

We wish you well for the future.