



Pool House Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119332
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291386
Inspection date 21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Kathryn Dodd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kidsgrove Tanterton, Ingol Preston, Lancashire PR2 7BX
School category	Community	Telephone number	01772 732628
Age range of pupils	4-11	Fax number	01772 732628
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mrs Christine Fell
Number on roll (school)	80	Headteacher	Mrs Julie Heath
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 21 September 2006	Inspection number 291386
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. It receives additional funding from the Excellence in Cities initiative and The Children's Fund. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There have been significant staffing changes in the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher and three newly qualified teachers. Pupils are taught mainly in mixed age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection and governors, staff, parents and pupils have every reason to feel proud. Pupils develop the confidence they need to achieve well because of the continued emphasis that staff place upon encouraging them to believe in themselves. Parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, recognise that allowing 'each and every child to fulfil their own potential' is at the very heart of this happy and caring school. As a result, pupils are well-prepared for their future. It is no surprise, therefore, that making sure pupils enjoy learning; do as well as they can; keep safe and healthy; and play an active part in the community all have high priority in the curriculum and in the day-to-day life of the school.

Standards in Year 6 are above average, and this represents good achievement from pupils' low starting points. Pupils throughout the school, including the children in the Foundation Stage, make good progress as a result of good teaching and learning. Adjustments to the curriculum have helped pupils to make up for previous weaknesses in the standard of their work, particularly in their writing. More pupils now reach levels of work higher than expected for their ages in English and mathematics. Teachers know there is further work to do in order to make sure that all pupils do as well as they can, by ensuring that the work they set always matches the differing needs of pupils in mixed age classes.

Everyone agrees that the key to recent improvements is the very good leadership of the headteacher. Her vision and enthusiasm for improving the school reflect the very high standards that she sets for herself, staff and the pupils. Despite a challenging period of staff instability and financial uncertainty, she has set the school on a clear path of continual improvement, whilst keeping the best interests of the pupils clearly in sight. This is now a school that knows its own strengths, is not afraid to say where it can do even better and gets on with putting things right.

Another important factor in the school's success is making the most of the outstanding partnerships that have been forged with other organisations, including external agencies. The school seizes every possible opportunity to work with others to support pupils with particular needs and to raise their achievement. Teachers who have recently accepted leadership and management responsibilities are keen to make a greater contribution. They have already identified that their next step is to collect and use information about pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum to identify where improvements are needed most to raise achievement further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make greater use of the assessment information to plan work that is more tightly matched to pupils' differing learning needs in mixed age classes.
- Make sure that teachers with leadership and management responsibilities contribute more fully to raising standards across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start in the Reception class, their attainment is below what is typical for their age, and their language and social skills are particularly weak. Girls and boys of all ages make good progress and, by the time they leave in Year 6, their standards are above average. This good achievement, which includes the work of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is the result of good teaching and learning. It is also due to the high priority that the school gives to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, whilst concentrating on their personal development and well-being. In 2005, standards in Year 6 national tests were above average, and the school expects to maintain this improving trend when the 2006 national test results are confirmed. Although the school does not expect that the significantly improved Year 2 national test results of 2005 will have been matched in 2006, these pupils achieved well relative to their low starting points. Standards in pupils' writing have improved throughout the school, and more pupils than previously now reach levels higher than expected for their ages by Year 6. These recent improvements reflect the school's determination to tackle weaknesses in pupils' achievement, in particular in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour make an important contribution to their achievements. Parents are very pleased that their children enjoy school and do well. One parent commented, 'By the time pupils leave school they have matured into happy and confident young people'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They make great strides in their self-confidence, have a keen sense of right and wrong and understand the high expectations held of them. Pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties respond extremely well to the praise that they are given and to the celebration of their achievements. Pupils say that this encourages them to try hard. Pupils know how to keep fit and understand why it is sensible to eat healthily. Older pupils enjoy looking after younger ones and making them feel safe. Pupils are pleased that they now have more opportunities to contribute to making the school a better, safer and healthier place to be, particularly through the school council. For a number of years, pupils' attendance has been below the national average, and this was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Recently attendance is close to average. This is the result of determined efforts by the school to forge better links with parents, promote good attendance and work more closely with external support agencies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning. Pupils enjoy good relationships with their teachers, who make lessons interesting and purposeful. As a result, pupils are attentive, behave well and make good progress. Teachers and support staff work together well to ensure that additional help is given to pupils who need it most. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. Staff accept the regular checking of the quality of their work, mainly by the headteacher, as an integral part of raising standards. They have worked hard to improve pupils' writing, and to increase the proportion of pupils doing better than expected for their ages. Although success is evident in recent test and assessment results, teachers are not complacent. Staff are keen to improve further. They know that their next priority is to collect and use information from assessing pupils more frequently and rigorously, so that they always plan and provide work that matches the capability of all their pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A varied and interesting curriculum helps pupils of all ages to achieve well. It gives good attention to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils say how much they enjoy lessons and appreciate trips and visitors into school. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for such a small school, particularly in sport. The new 'Wake up and Shake Up' sessions are extremely well attended, and make a good contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils who need additional help to boost their learning. The extra funds the school receives from national initiatives help to provide specialised learning, for example, the Nurture Class. Very good support for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties enables them to have equal access to the curriculum. As a result, they make great strides in their learning and in their personal achievements. Similarly, in response to the school's efforts to increase the proportion of higher attaining pupils, the teaching of pupils who are capable of additional challenge is now undertaken by a specialist teacher. A review of the curriculum is underway, however, with a focus on ensuring that pupils' work in the mixed age classes always builds upon what they can do already.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of all its pupils. Staff know the pupils very well, and parents say how much they appreciate the sensitive support and care that the school provides. Good procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils are in place. Pupils know that staff will help them to overcome any difficulties, and this helps pupils to feel safe and

secure at school. Pupils benefit from very good guidance to help them in their personal development. This, in turn, helps them to achieve well. Very close links between staff and external support agencies ensure that pupils and their families have the right kind of help at the right time. Teachers make satisfactory use of the information they collect about pupils' attainment. They use it to set targets for future learning with pupils and this helps them to know how they can improve their work. Although this is often successful in increasing pupils' learning skills, the practice is inconsistent between classes, and does not always have fullest possible impact on pupils' achievement, particularly in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The appointment of the new headteacher has made a significant contribution to the school's improvement since the previous inspection. She has successfully led the school through a period of instability, including many staffing changes, long-term absences, a falling roll and financial uncertainty. At the same time, she has raised standards and improved pupils' academic and personal achievement. Furthermore, the number of pupils in the school has started to rise again, following a long period of rapidly declining numbers in each year group. With no deputy headteacher and relatively few staff to accept delegated responsibilities, this is quite an achievement. The headteacher has done this by involving everyone, including parents, staff and governors, and by enlisting the support of an extremely wide range of external agencies. Staff who have taken on extra responsibilities, such as watching over standards in subjects and at each phase in school, take their very new duties seriously. They know that they are now ready to make a greater contribution to assisting the headteacher with improving the school. Their next step is to collect and use information about pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum to identify where improvements are needed most to raise achievement further. The school has been too cautious and modest in its evaluation of its own effectiveness. It is a good school, as evidenced by improving standards and pupils' good achievement. It has accurately pinpointed the right priorities for improving the school further, and has a good capacity to do so.

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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?	1
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?	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

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	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?	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

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	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	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

Pool House Community Primary School

Kidsgrove

Tanterton

Ingol

Preston

Lancashire

PR2 7BX

21 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. You were all very keen to talk to me and answer my questions really thoughtfully. I enjoyed my day with you very much. Your behaviour was good all the time, and you worked hard in lessons.

Pool House Community Primary is a good school. I can see why you told me that you enjoy coming so much, and why your parents are so very pleased with the school. All the adults care about you and work hard to help you to do well. You have lots of chances to do other interesting and exciting things. I particularly enjoyed seeing so many of you at the 'Wake Up and Shake Up' session in the hall and am really pleased that you could tell me that you know that this will help keep you fit and healthy.

I agree with you that your school is good. Your headteacher, staff and governors have done a wonderful job. They are still working really hard to make it even better. I am pleased that through the school council you too are able to help make your school a happier and safer place to be.

I have asked the school to make sure that your work is never too easy or too hard, but always gives you the chance to show what you are really capable of. You can help your teachers by always knowing what your targets are and checking all the time what you still have to do to reach them. I have also asked that your headteacher gets even more help from your teachers and other leaders in the school to keep a closer check on where you are learning well and where you might be able to do even better.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd

(Inspector)