

Pen Mill Infants' School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 123725 |
| Local Authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 292760 |
| Inspection dates | 15–16 May 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Stephen Lake |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 194 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mike Sibley |
| Headteacher | Minnie House |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 January 2002 |
| School address | St Michael's Avenue Yeovil BA21 4LD |
| Telephone number | 01935 474224 |
| Fax number | 01935 414794 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 3–7 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pen Mill Infant and Nursery School is an average size school. The number of pupils who move into or out of the school during their school career is higher than normal, particularly in Year 2. Those who join often have learning difficulties and are reluctant learners. In the last 12 months the school has been through a difficult time with a very large number of long-term staff absences. A number of the governors are new to the school. An independent pre-school group shares the facilities used by the Nursery class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pen Mill Infant and Nursery School is a good school. Pupils achieve well because it is well led and managed. The strong leadership of the headteacher, supported well by the senior management team and governors, has established good quality procedures for checking on the work of the school. This information is used well to identify areas for improvement. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Children enter school with levels of skills below those normally found. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage although progress in mathematics and personal and social education is good. Children enter Year 1 soundly prepared to learn although their continuing low skills in communication and language and literacy keep attainment below that normally expected when they start Year 1. Pupils make good progress overall in Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory because occasionally the work given to pupils is not sufficiently challenging and this hinders the progress of a few of the more able pupils. By the end of Year 2 pupils attain average standards although fewer pupils than normally found are attaining above average standards, particularly in mathematics. Pupils say that they sometimes want harder work especially in mathematics. Pupils' good information and communication technology (ICT) skills make a strong contribution to preparation for their economic well-being. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The provision in the good quality curriculum for pupils' personal development ensures that pupils, especially those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who join the school in Year 2, are enabled to learn effectively. The wide range of activities provided makes lessons interesting and is why pupils really enjoy their education. Many pupils told inspectors, 'Learning is fun.'

The good quality care, guidance and support ensure that pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. Parents appreciate the way the school looks after pupils. Typical of the comments received by inspectors was a parent who said, 'They looked after him just how I would.' New systems of checking on how well pupils are doing are used to identify ways to support and guide pupils to do better although the progress that children make in Foundation Stage is not monitored as effectively as it is in Years 1 and 2 and this limits the progress that a few children make.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good guidance to teachers to enable them to improve the quality of learning. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly, although this has not picked up the specific weakness in the progress of a few children in the Foundation Stage, the school has identified this as an area for development. Governors are supportive of the school but the data on pupils' attainment and progress are not available in a clear enough way to allow governors to monitor school improvement as effectively as they would like. Although the use of assessment data has improved a lot over the last few years, the school is aware that the information needs to be made more easily accessible to subject leaders and governors to support their monitoring of the impact of initiatives. Since the last inspection standards have risen faster than nationally indicating that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the information on pupils' progress better to set more precise targets for more able pupils that challenge them to do their very best.

- Review the ways in which information on pupils' attainment is presented and shared with staff and governors to enable them to have a clearer picture of overall school performance.
- Make better use of assessment information in the Foundation Stage to monitor the impact of teaching on children's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well to reach average standards. Attainment on entry is below expectations especially in communication and language skills. Children achieve satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage. The good progress in personal development and in mathematics reflects the good teaching in these areas. Children enter Year 1 prepared to learn but their skills, particularly their communication skills, remain below the levels normally found. Achievement in Key Stage 1 is good. Standards at age seven are in line with the national average. More pupils than usual join the school during Year 2 and attainment is held down a little by the impact of these pupils. Pupils have made best progress in reading and writing this year, reflecting the emphasis that the school has put upon improving standards in writing. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory with too few attaining above average standards, as the targets set for the more able pupils are not always precise enough to really challenge them to do their best. Pupils in Year 1 are making consistently good progress in all subjects as the impact of school initiatives to improve attainment take effect. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve at the same rate as other pupils thanks to the good support they receive. Standards in ICT and art are above those normally found at age seven.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy the school and are proud of it. Attendance has improved and is average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are sensitive to the attitudes and values of others within the school. Pupils are aware of their rights as learners and the consequences of being naughty. They make a good contribution to the community through the school council and other responsibilities, for example, looking after those who have been hurt. The skills they learn from taking the responsibilities contribute well to their good preparation for future economic well-being. Most are confident about their work and make visitors feel welcome. Pupils' behaviour is good and they work with a growing sense of independence and responsibility. They know how to stay safe because of the good support and guidance they receive. Pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle reflecting the school's award of Healthy School status, although the content of lunch boxes does not always reflect this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because of the good quality of teaching. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall with some strengths. Good teaching of personal and social education ensures good progress in these areas and makes children want to learn. Good behaviour management helps those who join the school in Year 2 to settle down quickly and start to learn. Good mathematics teaching in the Foundation Stage means that children make better progress in this subject than in their communication, language and literacy skills. The particularly effective

teaching of reading and writing in Years 1 and 2 leads to the good progress made by pupils and enables standards in reading and writing to catch up and surpass the standards in mathematics.

Most lessons are well planned with motivating and stimulating activities that usually build well on pupils' past learning, but sometimes information from assessment is not used well enough to set individual targets that really challenge pupils to do the best they possibly can, particularly in mathematics. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers, especially supporting pupils with learning difficulties and keeping them included in lessons. ICT is used well by teachers to extend pupils' experiences and motivation to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to the interests and needs of pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a wide range of activities that interest children and make them want to learn. Adult-led tasks are well planned and suitable opportunities are provided for children to learn through independent activities.

Throughout the school the well planned programme for personal, social and health education and the range of sport and after school clubs support pupils' personal development well and help them understand how to stay healthy and fit. The wide range of motivating activities, including good use of ICT, adds to pupils' enjoyment of school. Visits to places of interest stimulate pupils well and make links across the curriculum. The school works closely with other local schools and support agencies to ensure good programmes of work are provided to meet the needs of all pupils.

A few pupils do not make as much progress as they could because the curriculum is not matched closely enough to their needs to provide them with really challenging activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school looks after pupils well. Individuals are well known and valued. Good support is given to those who find settling into school difficult. Parents appreciate this, as one wrote, 'The ethos of the school supports and complements our own family ethos.' Great attention is given to ensuring that pupils stay safe and they receive clear guidance so that they know how to keep themselves safe. A new system for monitoring academic progress enables teachers to plan work that meets the needs of most pupils, especially those with learning difficulties, effectively. The information gained is used to set targets that challenge most pupils appropriately. Just occasionally, however, information on pupils' progress is not used precisely enough to set sufficiently challenging targets that will really stretch the most able pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership of the headteacher guides an effective senior management team. The impact of staff absences has been kept to a minimum. Effective systems for checking on the work of the school and monitoring the quality of teaching have identified appropriate areas for improvement. This has resulted in an improvement in the progress that pupils are making,

especially in reading and writing. The school improvement plan has suitable strategies for improving the monitoring of the Foundation Stage and the progress of more able pupils. As a result there have been many positive developments since the previous inspection, such as the rising standards in writing.

Governors support the school well, asking searching questions and seeking the views of parents and pupils. Budget management is good. Governors understand the need to monitor fully the overall effectiveness of the school from year to year and the school recognises that data on individual pupils' attainment need to be presented in way that makes it easier for governors and middle managers to monitor overall school performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <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

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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 | 3 |
| 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 | 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

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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 | 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

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|---|---|
| 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.

Annex A

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

17 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Pen Mill Infant and Nursery School, St Michael's Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4LD

Thank you for looking after us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out why you like your school so much.

We think that Pen Mill Infant and Nursery School is a good school. You are learning well because the school is well led and managed. You make good progress during your time in school and reach standards similar to those attained by most pupils across the country.

These are some of the good things that we found.

- Your personal development is good and many of you make a good contribution to the community through the jobs you do in school.
- Your behaviour is good and you take care of each other well.
- The school looks after you really well and makes sure that you are safe.
- Your teachers work hard to make learning interesting and you learn well because the teaching is good.
- You told us that you really enjoy school. We think that is because the curriculum is good and provides interesting things for you to do.

We have asked your teachers and the governors to do some things to help the school to be even better. We have asked them to:

- make sure that they use information on how well you are learning to set targets that really challenge each of you to do your very best. You can help by telling your teachers if you find your work easy
- make more use of the information on how children are doing in the Foundation Stage
- make sure that all teachers and governors can use the information on your progress to see how well the school is doing.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Lake Lead inspector