



Pewsey Vale School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126498
Local Authority Wiltshire
Inspection number 293577
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Tom Winskill HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Wilcot Road
School category	Community		Pewsey
Age range of pupils	11–16		SN9 5EW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01672 565000
Number on roll (school)	388	Fax number	01672 565009
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Nigel Talbot
		Headteacher	Carol Grant
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	22–23 November 2006	293577

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small comprehensive school serving the town of Pewsey and the surrounding rural area. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is greater than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. This is a satisfactory school which is on an upward trajectory and has good capacity for further improvement. Achievement and standards are now satisfactory as a result of improvements in teaching and learning, the curriculum and leadership and management. The benefits of these improvements have yet to be reflected fully in achievement and standards at Key Stage 4, which are adequate but still below average. This is an improvement on 2005 where there was significant underachievement in Key Stage 4. However, many pupils are now beginning to make good progress.

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. As a result, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Improvements have been brought about by clear, focused action by senior leaders with the support of subject leaders and a teaching staff which is keen to improve its practice. In some lessons, progress is still hampered because teachers do not focus sufficiently on pupils' learning or because pupils lack the confidence to work independently.

The curriculum is now satisfactory. It meets the needs of a wider range of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, better than at the last inspection. Consequently, pupils' attitudes and motivation have improved. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. In particular, there have been improvements in pupils' behaviour which is now good. This is because the school has a clear and consistently implemented behaviour management policy. As a result there is a calm, purposeful working atmosphere in the school. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with particular strengths in care and support. This effective support ensures that vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher is building effectively on the improvements made over the last two years. Together with senior staff and governors, she is providing a clear and realistic direction for the school's further development. The headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of pupils and staff so that the improvement programme has not been interrupted. As one parent rightly commented, 'She has a good grasp of the reins.' The school has very well organised procedures for monitoring its work. School leaders and governors make good use of the information gathered to evaluate all aspects of the school's work. This effective evaluation enables the senior team and governors to plan successfully for further improvement and develop appropriate strategies to tackle weaknesses. For example, information gathered from lesson observations and pupils' questionnaires has provided the basis for improving the quality of teaching and assessment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 4 by ensuring that pupils make the necessary progress in all subjects and that no groups of pupils underachieve.
- Improve teaching and learning by helping pupils to become less dependent on their teachers and to become more actively involved in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Standards at Key Stage 4, as shown by GCSE results in 2006, are below average. These pupils' attainment on entry to the school was also below average, indicating that they made broadly satisfactory progress. Almost all girls made satisfactory or better progress. Boys' progress, although satisfactory overall, was more varied and was marred by underachievement in French, drama, German, leisure and tourism and religious education. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 4, both boys and girls made satisfactory progress.

Standards at Key Stage 3, as shown by test results for mathematics and science in 2006 and English in 2005, are broadly average. (The school is waiting on the results of a full re-mark of English tests at Key Stage 3 for 2006.) At Key Stage 3, pupils made satisfactory progress overall, with many making good progress in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, often reaching or exceeding their targets. In addition, good support ensures other groups of vulnerable children, including looked after children, make good progress. Pupils whose first language is not English also make good progress as a result of effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved significantly since the last inspection. There is more consistent management of behaviour or as older pupils put it, 'stricter teachers'. Pupils and staff are clear about the expected levels of behaviour. This means that everyone can be more relaxed and focus on their work, which helps them to learn more effectively. In addition, improvements in teaching and learning and in the curriculum ensure pupils enjoy many lessons. Attendance is satisfactory and the level of unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme, religious education and school assemblies help pupils to develop good spiritual and moral awareness. Their social development is good. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are successfully integrated into lessons and treated with consideration by their peers. Pupils work well in pairs and groups when given the opportunity. A good appreciation of other cultures is fostered through effective international links, most notably exchange visits with a school in the Gambia.

Pupils can explain the importance of healthy eating but many do not choose healthy food from the lunchtime menu. Pupils are prepared adequately for life after school. There is a satisfactory programme of work-related activities but too few leave with GCSE passes at 'C' or above in English and mathematics. Pupils make good contributions

to the school and to local communities. The newly elected prefects and senior prefects in Year 11 are very proud of their status which brings added responsibility. There is an active school council entrusted with its own budget. 'Operation Christmas Child', a charitable project which links the school with the local community, has been enthusiastically supported by the pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers and pupils get on well and this helps pupils enjoy their lessons and work well. A strength of most lessons is that teachers make pupils aware of what they will learn and provide them with opportunities to reflect on what they have learnt. This is particularly effective when pupils themselves have to explain or write down what they have learnt and what they find hard. Lessons are generally well planned and include a good range of activities which engage pupils' interest and are beginning help many make good progress.

Teaching increasingly uses a variety of interesting activities which keeps pupils actively learning and encourages them to think for themselves. For example, in an outstanding music lesson, pupils made superb progress in their understanding of musical composition because the teacher had organised several different tasks that built their learning in small steps. In a good information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, imaginative teaching and an insistence that pupils worked out the solution to a problem themselves ensured they made good progress.

A weakness in some lessons is that teachers talk too much and limit pupils' opportunities to work independently and think for themselves. Planning, although detailed, sometimes focuses too much on tasks rather than on what pupils will learn and how the learning will take place. In these lessons, pupils depend on the teacher too much and make less progress. Some pupils' over-reliance on the teacher, in part due to a fear of making mistakes, means that they lack the confidence or self-belief to accelerate their rate of learning. More able pupils, including those identified as gifted and talented, are not regularly extended by suitably matched tasks in lessons. This limits the progress they are able to make.

Teachers mark pupils' books regularly but do not always tell pupils how to improve. Pupils do know their target grades compared to their current grade because they receive good feedback at the end of units of work. Another successful technique regularly used by teachers is encouraging pupils to assess their own and others' work, which results in pupils having a better understanding of how to improve. For example, in a good English lesson, groups of pupils assessed each other's responses to a question by comparing them to the criteria for achieving different GCSE grades.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Improvements include a programme of lessons in Years 7 and 8 which is beginning to build pupils' learning skills so that they are better equipped to solve problems and think for themselves. Year 9 relish their 'enterprise' lessons which they say, 'Teach us management skills, team skills and how to manage money'. The school benefits from the close partnership arrangements it has with other schools and organisations in providing a variety of courses. Improvements at Key Stage 4 are appreciated by pupils. They have a better choice of options which allows them to choose from a growing range of academic and vocational subjects. More able pupils in Year 10 successfully follow GCSE courses in statistics and media studies. A small number of pupils are studying separate sciences outside normal curriculum time. Those pupils who follow courses outside the school, however, often miss lessons, including English or mathematics, which is a weakness in the provision.

Pupils gain useful skills for the world of work through satisfactory opportunities, including work experience, mock interviews and careers advice. Participation in extra-curricular activities at school and at the on-site youth centre, known as 'The Shak', has increased and now contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school. All pupils benefit from two hours of physical education each week, and this makes a good contribution to their health.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils appreciate the staff's strong commitment to their safety and well-being in this close-knit school community. Risk assessments are undertaken as required and procedures for safeguarding the pupils and for child protection are secure. The pupils are confident that any incidents of bullying will be dealt with swiftly and effectively. The police and youth workers in the on-site youth centre make an effective contribution to the pupils' good understanding about their rights, responsibilities and personal safety.

The pupils receive high quality care and support, leading to their good personal development. The school is improving its systems for setting targets for pupils and monitoring their progress. These improvements are at an early stage of implementation and so have not yet influenced achievement and standards. The school provides effective support plans for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Their progress is carefully monitored, particularly their acquisition of vital literacy skills. However, momentum is sometimes lost in Years 10 and 11 where some pupils begin to reject the support provided because they feel it does not meet their needs. Support for pupils at key points of change in their school life is good. This includes induction into Year 7, guidance on choosing GCSE subjects, and comprehensive, impartial advice about further education and employment options beyond Year 11.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior team is providing stable and effective leadership, following a period of change, which is leading to a range of improvements. Well thought out improvement strategies are accurately targeted at areas of weakness but they have not been in place long enough to sustain improvements in standards and achievement. This is why leadership and management are judged as satisfactory rather than good. For example, school leaders and governors monitor performance rigorously. They have begun to use this information to plan specific work with groups and individual pupils to improve their progress. It is too early to judge the impact on achievement of this developing programme of extra support.

Development planning is satisfactory, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The school improvement plan lays out a number of strategic, longer-term objectives. The school rightly identifies the achievement of specialist school status as a key objective which it is actively pursuing. Shorter-term elements of the school improvement plan focus successfully on what needs to be done to raise achievement, including meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. However the plan does not incorporate the school's targets for achievement and standards in sufficient detail or identify success criteria for different tasks.

The quality of middle leadership is improving and is now satisfactory. Recent appointments have strengthened this area and weaknesses in subject leadership are being effectively tackled. The governing body is effective, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Governors are fully involved in monitoring and evaluation, holding the school to account and working with the senior team in defining the longer-term development of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

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 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	3
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	3
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	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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	3
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	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

We inspected your school recently and I am writing to inform you of our findings. Thank you for making us welcome and particularly those of you whom we spoke to in lessons, at break and lunchtime and in meetings.

Pewsey Vale is a satisfactory and improving school. It had some problems in the past but these are being sorted out. Although the latest GCSE results were below the national average, most of you are beginning to make at least satisfactory progress. Teaching and learning are improving. Teachers are quite strict but this helps you learn and enjoy your lessons. You have a much greater range of subjects to choose from at Key Stage 4 than a few years ago. You behave well and get on well with your teachers. You tell us the small amount of bullying is well dealt with and that the school is a safe and friendly place where you are well cared for. The headteacher is doing a good job, together with other senior staff, in bringing about more improvements to the school.

There are some improvements the school should make:

- You should do much better in test and examinations, especially at GCSE. You can help by making sure your learning in class is as good as possible and that you make good use of all the different types of support the school provides for you.
- In lessons you should think for yourselves more and make sure you get fully involved in learning activities. We have told the school that teachers should help you do this so you can make better progress.