

Mexborough Pitt Street Infant School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 106683 |
| Local Authority | Doncaster |
| Inspection number | 309196 |
| Inspection dates | 15–16 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Jane Hughes |

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 category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 118 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Cllr Edwin Simpson |
| Headteacher | Mrs Pauline Brandon |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 January 2005 |
| School address | Pitt Street Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 0LT |
| Telephone number | 01709 583271 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school takes pupils from an area of significant economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is double the national average. Fewer pupils than usual have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A lower than average proportion of pupils has a heritage other than White British and almost all pupils speak English as their home language. The school has achieved the following awards: Healthy Schools; Activemark; Artsmark Gold and the Roy Castle Clean Air Award - Gold.

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: 1

This is an outstanding school. Parents sum it up perfectly, 'The school gives our children a great start to their education.' Improvement defines the school's focus and emanates directly from the relentless drive and determination of the headteacher. There is rigour in every area of the school's practice and the headteacher unites the small, highly effective staff into a successful team. Everyone plays an important role in the school's success. Skills and expertise are shared generously so that the professional expertise of the staff develops apace. Staff share their best practice to colleagues across the local authority and this helps to establish very strong partnerships with other schools. The school's management is highly efficient and governance is first-rate. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance even though some of their self-evaluation is modest. There is evidence of strong improvement throughout the school since the last inspection and a strong capacity to improve further.

A key feature of the school is the very high quality teaching. This results in the outstanding achievement by all groups of pupils, irrespective of their abilities, gifts and talents. From very low starting points, pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. They are increasingly adept at using new technology and this, coupled with their secure basic skills, ensures they are well equipped for their future learning.

Pupils speak with pride of their school and clearly form good relationships with their teachers. They arrive ready to learn and are happy to stay on at the end of the day to participate in a variety of clubs and sports. Pupils develop very good attitudes to learning and behave beautifully. They relish responsibility, such as organising the school fair and enjoy helping to raise funds for the school and charitable organisations. The stimulating curriculum supports pupils' learning seamlessly as they move from the Foundation Stage into Year 1. Enhanced with excellent external expertise and regular themed weeks, the lively curriculum whets pupils' appetite for learning. Outstanding support systems ensure that pupils receive all the academic guidance they require to become very successful learners. Pupils assess their own and others' learning in class and develop excellent evaluative skills which will serve them well in the future. There is a keen focus on pupils' personal and emotional development. As a result, they grow into increasingly responsible citizens, equipped with a good understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Highly skilled staff nurture young children's love of school and thirst for learning. There is a strong emphasis on children's social, language and mathematical skills because these are the areas where they need the most help. Children arrive in the Nursery with very low level skills. By the end of Reception, children meet the goals set for them and some exceed these. Children achieve exceptionally well and make rapid progress because provision is of the highest quality. Accurate assessments identify children who require additional help from an early age. As a result, they achieve as well as other groups of children and benefit from highly personalised support. Children have very positive attitudes to learning, know what is expected of them and feel safe. They understand simple rules and their behaviour is exceptionally good. They take responsibility for their own learning. Children are encouraged to look at what they and others have done during an activity and ask pertinent questions to help consolidate their learning. The very best work habits are established and these provide an excellent basis on which to

develop children's future learning and development. Child-led activities are stimulating and appropriate. Classrooms are very well resourced, as is the outdoor space for Reception children. The outdoor learning environment used by Nursery children awaits renewal and lacks the same appeal and support for learning. The Foundation Stage leader sets the highest standards. She provides a first-class role model, as an excellent early years' practitioner and senior leader.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the plans to improve the outdoor learning space in the Nursery and so reflect more closely the high quality provision indoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The very good start that children make in the Foundation Stage continues throughout the school. By the time they leave Year 2, pupils reach standards that are broadly average in reading, writing, and mathematics. High standards are evident in information and communication technology (ICT) and art. Pupils achieve exceptionally well from their starting points and this is equally true of those who join the school in Years 1 or 2 with skill levels below those of their peers. The small numbers of pupils in each year group render the published data unreliable and standards fluctuate more than is usual as a result. Following national patterns, girls tend to outperform the boys, especially in reading and writing. However, the curriculum is designed to especially capture the interest of boys and this is having a positive impact on their attainment and enjoyment this year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities work closely with highly skilled learning support assistants who enhance these pupils' learning experiences so they, too, achieve exceptionally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. Their exemplary behaviour is a credit to staff and parents. Pupils' attention rarely wanders in lessons and so little time is wasted. Pupils explore throughout the day and are totally engrossed in their daily experiences. They speak with pride of their school and say simply that their teachers are 'fantastic'. They are at ease in the friendly atmosphere, say they feel safe and clearly enjoy the independence they are given. As a result, they mature into conscientious and independent learners. They respond well to prompts in lessons to identify what they are learning and what they could improve. Pupils are excited as they contribute to the daily 'learning logs' in each classroom. These celebrate various achievements by pupils that day. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school with comments such as, 'My child has blossomed since joining the school'. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development stems directly from the rich experiences adults offer to children each day. Pupils are respectful and sensitive members of the community, quick to help others and increasingly aware of the diversity of modern life. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils attend school regularly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils are confident learners who approach activities with an equal mix of enthusiasm and application. Excellent relationships encourage pupils to feel secure and relaxed in the cheerful classrooms that abound with eye-catching resources. High quality planning and an inventive curriculum enable skilful teachers and learning support assistants to work very successfully together to help pupils make excellent progress. Parents and volunteer helpers support pupils' learning extremely well. Parents comment, 'As a parent I feel involved in the processes of both learning and fun.' Meticulous checks and tracking ensure that teachers plan and teach to a consistently high quality, full of content relevant to the needs of each individual. Teachers ensure that vibrant displays in classrooms and corridors celebrate the wonders of the natural world, often through the medium of pupils' high quality art work. There is good use of skilled visitors who open up a whole new world to pupils. For example, everyone thoroughly enjoyed helping to design and build a permanent 'Twigloo' on the field.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An innovative curriculum brings challenge and relevance to pupils' learning and meets their needs exceptionally well. Each year group follows a curriculum based on the Foundation Stage areas of learning. This offers the practical and investigative experiences these pupils, particularly the boys, need in order to develop an interest in reading and writing. Pupils are invited to contribute to numerous plans to improve the school environment. They focus on developing ideas and then resourcing the plans. Pupils evaluate the outcomes in order to work out how they can make further improvements. Thus, pupils acquire the fundamentals of project management, a desirable skill for the future. Pupils' basic skills are very well developed through 'small world' play scenarios. Learning is purposeful because lessons have a clear objective and pupils complete the statement, 'I am learning this because.' before they begin each task. Thus, their learning becomes purposeful. Elements of literacy, numeracy and ICT are evident in all subjects, which mean that pupils practise those skills throughout the day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care and academic guidance are of an equally exceptional quality. Parents say, 'This is a kind and caring school with a great environment.' All the appropriate systems are in place to safeguard learners and to ensure their safety, health and well-being. Adults support pupils' academic, physical and emotional needs extremely well. Lunch staff maintain high expectations of pupils at play and the cook provides healthy filling meals. Ancillary staff ensure that all areas of the school are attractive and safe. Administrators present a friendly face to parents and have a rigorous system to check on reasons for absence. Pupils know exactly how well they are achieving and what they need to do next to improve. They are very familiar with their targets because these literally pop up from the back of exercise books and are visible throughout lessons. Exemplary assessment procedures provide a clear picture of pupils' progress through school. Strong links with other schools secure a seamless transition for pupils at the end of Year 2.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Percolating down from the headteacher, leadership and management are of the highest calibre. The small staff team collaborates willingly on all aspects of the school's work. They take their lead from the drive for improvement emanating from the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The headteacher sets the bar consistently high in terms of her expectations of pupils, staff and parents. The whole-school community is engaged in a constant cycle of review and renewal and, as a result, pupils achieve outstandingly well. Governors are totally committed to the challenges laid down by senior leaders and are justifiably proud of the school and the astute staff appointments they have made. They are very knowledgeable and offer support and challenge in equal measure. Financial affairs are administered efficiently. The school establishes excellent, supportive relationships with outside agencies and other schools and enjoys a fine reputation in the local community. Parents confirm that Mexborough Pitt is, 'A very parent and community oriented school, listening to our views and concerns and quickly acting on them. It's like your best friend.'

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Annex A

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? | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 1 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| 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

Inspection of Mexborough Pitt Street Infant School, Mexborough, S64 0LT

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when I inspected your school. I feel very lucky to have shared two days with you. My chats with so many of you were great fun. You saw me write lots of things down while I was with you. I was making a big decision. How to describe your school? In the end, it was an easy decision. You are all so good at choosing and making decisions, so I am setting you a little test. A bit like in the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' that you enjoy so much. There is a long word, a medium word and a short word. Here are the three words. Which one describes your school the best? Number 1: outstanding. Number 2: fantastic. Number 3: great. I'll let you into a secret now. I've cheated a bit because in my view they all mean the same thing. But, in the report, I have to use the long word, 'outstanding'.

There are lots of reasons why your school is outstanding. You all work very hard and do your best. You achieve your targets and behave beautifully. You love coming to school and get on so well with the teachers and other adults. Your teachers plan exciting activities. Your headteacher knows how to help everyone in school to do their very best because that's what she does too. All the adults take excellent care of you and you feel safe in school. Your parents think the school is wonderful.

One part of my job is to see what your school could do even better. I have asked the governors and headteacher to make sure that the outdoor area for the Nursery children is redeveloped, as in the plans, so the children can enjoy learning and playing outside as much as indoors.

I was so pleased to see that you and your parents are very proud of your school. Carry on enjoying it and working hard.