

Aberford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107985
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309562
Inspection date	7 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs R Toone
Headteacher	Mrs J Heggie
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	School Lane Aberford Leeds West Yorkshire LS25 3BU
Telephone number	0113 281 3302
Fax number	0113 281 3302

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The following issues were investigated: provision in the Foundation Stage; pupils' personal development, especially their contribution to their own learning; the leadership and management of the school and whether the partnership with parents needs further strengthening. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small primary school serves the village of Aberford near Leeds. A small number of pupils come from outside the immediate area. The school is increasing in size because of new housing developments in the vicinity. Most pupils come from socially and economically advantaged backgrounds. Almost all are White British with a small proportion from mixed White backgrounds. Some 3% of pupils are in the care of the local authority; the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the number with a statement of special educational need. The school is an Investor in People and recently gained the Inclusion Award. Almost half the teaching staff has changed in the last year. The headteacher started in January 2008.

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. Pupils agree and say that the best things about their school are the 'sports' and the way that, 'Everyone is helpful and nice to each other.' This is why the school has a happy family atmosphere, behaviour is good and attendance is well above average. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for improvement. It is building on its past successes and forging ahead successfully with its aim to raise achievement further and enrich pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.

Achievement is good. From broadly average starting points in Reception, pupils go on to reach above average standards overall by the end of Year 6 although in some year groups standards are well above average at the end of Year 6. In 2007 the school's overall results in national tests were in the top 10% in the country, confirming the upward trend of the last three years. However, results in national tests tend to vary depending on the mix of pupils in the very small year groups. Standards in mathematics are consistently slightly higher than those in English because throughout the school the subject is taught with a strong focus on problem solving. A concerted push since January on improving presentation, accuracy and writing longer pieces of work has had a marked impact on the quality of pupils' writing. Standards in English are rising rapidly as a result. Pupils say they 'work hard sometimes but some of the work is easy, especially reading and science.' They agree they work harder in mathematics 'because we have to think'. Their comments point to a relative weakness in the way pupils are taught. Teaching quality is undoubtedly good, because teachers have high expectations and hence pupils learn well overall. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to work independently, to ask questions to which they want to find out the answers and to think and work things out for themselves. This means they tend to learn at the pace set by the teachers, who guide them through each stage of their learning. This weakness in teaching holds back pupils' achievement and especially that of the more able. Opportunities are also missed to give pupils responsibility for checking their own learning. Teachers' marking, especially in English and science, encourages but does not always give precise points for improvement. Therefore pupils are unsure exactly what they have to do to improve their work and tend to repeat mistakes. The missed opportunities for independent learning and for helping pupils to learn from their mistakes prevent achievement from being outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils achieve well because they are given good individual support and guidance from skilled teaching assistants. Provision for vulnerable pupils is good, with the role of the learning mentor playing a key part in successfully providing for a wide range of needs.

Leadership and management are good. Dynamic yet sensitive leadership by the headteacher results in staff having high aspirations and a strong sense of common purpose. Senior leaders check the work of the school carefully, which is why self-assessment is accurate and the school has a clear sense of direction. A revised leadership structure is helping to accelerate improvement through enabling leadership at all levels. It is also evident in the way the headteacher leads alongside staff, teaching in every class and leading by example. This means that changes are based on detailed knowledge and experience. For instance, rigorous assessment of pupils' progress highlighted the fact that boys, as well as outnumbering girls, generally do better. Teachers are currently trialling positive strategies to encourage girls, based on more accurate assessment of pupils' relative achievements.

Governance is good. Governors ask the right questions to hold the school to account for its actions. Their increased understanding of information from national test data and the school's

own assessments has sharpened their awareness of the school's potential. While the majority of parents have very positive views a significant minority are more cautious, expressing concerns centring on teaching, learning and behaviour. The inspection judges all these areas to be good. Governors and staff are aware of the need to develop further the partnership with parents and to keep them closely informed. Planned changes to ensure that parents are more fully involved with their children's learning are timely and well judged. The school takes good care of its pupils and safeguarding fully meets current government requirements. Pupils are adamant, 'There is no bullying because we are all friends.'

Pupils have good awareness of the importance of fruit, vegetables and exercise to maintain health. They see their energetic play at break and lunchtimes as high spots of the day, especially since the school council purchased new play equipment. The role of the school council has developed considerably in recent months as they now have a budget and have learned to double it through 'match funding'. Pupils therefore have an increased say in what goes on at their school. All pupils have responsibilities. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 act as 'buddies' to promote friendship and pupils in Years 3 and 4 take turns to be playground equipment monitors. With their good literacy, numeracy and computer skills, and healthy competitiveness in sports, pupils are well prepared for their future lives. The school's ability to identify and tackle areas for improvement clearly demonstrates its good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From broadly average starting points children make good progress. By the start of Year 1 almost all are working securely within expected levels and a large proportion exceed them. Children make the best progress in personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy skills, which are relative weaknesses when they first join the Reception year. They are well taught and develop into confident, articulate individuals as a result, capable of spending extended periods of time on one activity if it interests them. Opportunities are missed, however, to develop children's curiosity and independence through providing them with a wide range of thought-provoking activities both indoors and outdoors to extend their learning. Children set their own challenges but staff do not always follow their lead and this inhibits children's investigative skills. The provision is well led and managed by the headteacher. Progress has improved as a result of precise assessments of what children know and can do which are then used to plan the next steps in learning. Children are well cared for.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils, including children in the Foundation Stage, more opportunities to be active, independent learners so as to encourage their curiosity, develop their thinking skills and provide a greater level of challenge, especially for the more able pupils.
- Ensure that teachers' marking gives precise points for improvement and that pupils are involved in checking their own learning so that they know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Aberford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Leeds, LS25 3BU

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you, including some members of the school council. I agree with you that you go to a good school. You are right that it helps you to be healthy and it certainly prepares you well for your future lives. You are well taught and your teachers and all the adults in school take good care of you. Your school is changing in lots of ways. Giving the school council more power and increasing the opportunities for you to compete in sporting events are just some of the ways in which your school is changing.

You make good progress in your learning and reach above average and sometimes well above average standards in your work, especially in mathematics, where results in national tests are consistently good. Your writing has also come on a lot in the last few months, as you have more time to write and handwriting lessons are helping you to write more neatly.

This is what I have asked your teachers to do to make your school even better.

- All of you, including the children in the Foundation Stage, should have more opportunities to ask questions and find things out for yourselves. This will encourage you to become curious learners. It will help you to think for yourselves and so give you more challenges, especially those of you who find some of the work too easy at present.
- When teachers mark your work they should give you precise points for improvement. They should also involve you in checking your own learning so you know exactly what you need to do to improve your work. This will help you not to repeat mistakes.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time in school. It certainly is a very happy place to be because you are so kind and helpful to each other.