

Pirton Hill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109574
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	310028
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Stephanie Stiff
Headteacher	Miss Debbie Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Butely Road Luton LU4 9EX
Telephone number	01582507924
Fax number	01582490551

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pirton Hill is an average sized urban infant school situated on the northern outskirts of Luton. About two thirds of the pupils come from outside the immediate area. There is a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds. About half the pupils are from White British backgrounds, and others are from 12 different minority ethnic groups. There are 49 pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Overall, families' social circumstances are below those typically found. The school has an above average number of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school is in the process of being amalgamated with the partner junior school and the plan is that Pirton Hill will become a primary school with effect from 1 September 2008. The school has gained the following awards: Investors in People, Healthy Schools, Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pirton Hill is a good school that has some outstanding features. It has shown good improvement since the previous inspection and it quite rightly has the respect and confidence of its parents. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education. Parents are almost unanimously supportive and the parent who wrote: 'Pirton Hill provides a caring environment with good values and principles', appropriately summarises some key strengths.

Because the care and support are outstanding, pupils thrive in their personal and academic development. On entry to the Foundation Stage a large majority of children have skills very much below those typically found, particularly in their personal development. Throughout the school, pupils make outstanding progress in this area. Behaviour is good and the pupils who have particular behavioural needs are managed effectively by teachers and support staff. Pupils are proud of their school, have very positive attitudes and thoroughly enjoy lessons because they are helped to become confident and secure: 'Our teachers are fun and we love learning' said one pupil. The provision is good and all adults work closely together as a team so that pupils develop a good understanding of staying safe and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils make good progress in all year groups because the quality of teaching and learning are good. Although only about three quarters of pupils enter Year 1 having met the expected goals at the end of the Foundation Stage, pupils of all groups achieve well and by the time they reach the end of Year 2, standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. The recent focus on strengthening learning through more effective strategies is paying dividends because pupils now have a good understanding of their targets and what they have to do to achieve them. However, these good strategies are not fully established in all classes.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher provide excellent leadership and management. There are excellent procedures in place to check on the school's provision and pupils' progress, and the information gained from these evaluations is used exceptionally well to target areas of need. For example, in the 2007 national assessments the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in mathematics was significantly below average. As a result of good improvement plans, current Year 2 pupils are on course to attain standards that are the same as in reading and writing. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school but are over-reliant on information provided by the headteacher. Because they do not visit the school sufficiently often to find out about provision and progress for themselves, they are not in a position to question the school knowledgeably.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children settle happily in the Reception classes because the staff are welcoming and there is a high quality induction programme that is supported exceptionally well by the school's family workers. The quality of teaching is good and children enjoy a good range of high quality activities. The curriculum covers effectively all the required areas of learning and staff ensure that there is a good balance between learning that is directed by the teachers and that which the children choose for themselves. Classrooms are attractively displayed and well organised, helping children to gain an understanding of routines and encouraging their enjoyment of learning. Children commence the Foundation

Stage with skills that are well below those that are typically found, particularly in their personal and communication development. Because the quality of the curriculum and teaching are good, they make good progress and by the time that they enter Year 1, about three quarters meet the expected goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the role of governors by ensuring that a systematic programme of school visits is established.
- Ensure that the good strategies to help pupils learn are evident in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. From low starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well in Years 1 and 2 because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Those who have learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early and well-targeted programmes are provided for them. The school has a significant number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. These pupils make rapid progress in their English acquisition due to the good support they receive. Although their speaking skills remain behind those of many other pupils, they learn English quickly and well, and their achievement is good. Staff are skilled in supporting pupils who have behavioural difficulties and so these pupils also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding and progress is rapid in these areas. Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection due to the effective strategies that have been put into place. As a result, attendance is now at the national average. Pupils understand how to stay safe and healthy. They know who to turn to when troubled and are confident that adults will deal with any issues that they may have. They thoroughly enjoy school and delight in taking responsibilities as playground police, play pals and lunchtime helpers. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and the community. For example, the school council helped raise money for different charities such as 'Jeans for Genes' and the Macmillan nurses. They are currently organizing a 'sponsored bounce' to raise money for new playground equipment. Pupils' well-being is fostered successfully and they are well equipped for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection when there were comparative weaknesses in Year 1. Teaching and learning are now good and there are outstanding features in all year groups. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and ensure that classrooms are characterised by a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils enjoy learning. Lesson objectives are usually made clear and, when teaching is outstanding such as in an excellent Year 1 literacy lesson, these are referred to

throughout the lesson. This helped the pupils to know what they had to do to succeed and also provided a good context and purpose for the activities. Teachers get pupils to talk in pairs or small groups to enable them to reflect on the work that they are doing and to extend their speaking and listening skills. Good questioning enables most teachers to make suitable amendments to their teaching. The school is aware that these effective strategies to help pupils learn are not employed in all lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. At the time of the previous inspection there were weaknesses in the curriculum for information and communication technology. There are now many opportunities for pupils to use computers and other technology and these resources help to support learning very well. In addition, the curriculum has been effectively modified recently to ensure that lessons are linked together well in order to make learning more meaningful and focused on pupils' interests and ideas. The school's good and wide-ranging programme for developing the pupils' personal, social and health education results in outstanding achievement in these areas. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities and also visits are made to enrich learning. The daily 'Take 10' sessions in the playground in which all Year 1 and 2 pupils have 10 minutes of robust physical exercise also contributes well to the pupils' development of healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and support for pupils' personal and academic development are outstanding. Support for pupils who find learning difficult and those at an early stage of learning English is good. The family workers and support staff have a very positive impact on the pupils' learning and personal development. Robust systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after. School systems for checking progress are excellent. They are thorough and comprehensive and ensure that any pupils whose learning slows below expectations are quickly identified and programmes put into place to quicken progress. Pupils are clear about their targets in literacy and numeracy and, because teachers' marking is of good quality, they are helped to understand what they have to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior leaders is excellent. There is an incisive vision for the school and a rigorous focus on improving provision and standards, which results in good accountability structures. Management of the staff is sensitive and, because teamwork is strong, all staff feel empowered to make a contribution to the school's educational direction and these views are valued and reflected upon. There were weaknesses in some aspects of subject leadership at the time of the previous inspection. These weaknesses have been removed and there are now very effective evaluation systems in place and good improvement plans that involve all staff, so that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Governance is satisfactory. Although governors are committed to the school and support the school well, they are not yet in a position to question the school because they do not visit the school sufficiently often to gain an understanding of provision.

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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
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	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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	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

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	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	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	3
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

10 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pirton Hill Infant School, Butely Road, Luton LU4 9EX

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. You made us very welcome and we understand why it is that you thoroughly enjoy your school and are proud of it.

We were particularly impressed by the way that you play and work together so well. We think that it is brilliant how you all help to make sure that everyone is happy.

Yours is a good school and here are some of the really good things that we found.

- You make good progress in your learning and attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You told me that behaviour is good, and it is! You have very positive attitudes, thoroughly enjoy your lessons and you play and work together exceptionally well. Your development in these areas is outstanding.
- All the adults work exceptionally well to make sure that you are very safe and well cared for.
- Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are doing an excellent job and they are supported well by other members of staff.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and fun and provide a good range of activities for you to enjoy.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to work on two things to make your school even better.

- For your school governors to come to see you in school more often so that they can check lessons and see for themselves how well you are doing.
- For your teachers to make sure that your learning is really good in all lessons.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and keeping your targets constantly in mind so you can achieve them as quickly as possible.

With best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector