

Powell's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115681
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312026
Inspection date	4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Tallon
Headteacher	Teresa Day
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Gloucester Street Cirencester GL7 2DJ
Telephone number	01285 653799
Fax number	01285 644165

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the start given to children in the Reception Year and children's standards on entry to Year 1; how well teaching, the curriculum and academic guidance promote progress in Years 1 to 6, particularly in writing; and the extent to which leaders evaluate the impact of teaching and take precisely the right action for improvement. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' progress; visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work; discussions with staff, the chair of governors and pupils; and analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire. 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 of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Situated close to the centre of Cirencester, this large primary school draws its pupils not only from the town but also from the surrounding villages. Most pupils are from relatively advantaged social and economic backgrounds. The vast majority are of White British heritage and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. When children enter the Reception Year, most have attainment above the level expected and some have particularly well developed skills for their age.

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 that has some outstanding features. As one parent observed, 'It has the warmth and inclusiveness of a small school combined with the facilities and ambitions of a big school.' Another summed up the views of many when she said, 'Powell's is a wonderful school! The staff nurture the pupils in all areas: pastoral, spiritual, curricular and extra-curricular.'

The school is exceptionally successful in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Almost all pupils enjoy school tremendously and maintain consistently high standards of behaviour. They make a huge contribution to the school and wider community. The school council, for example, makes a presentation at meetings for parents of children starting in Reception. It has met with the mayor and town clerk about flooding in Cirencester that affected the school.

Older pupils care for younger ones extremely well. Pupils are very aware of their responsibilities for looking after the environment and are genuinely concerned about issues such as global warming. They know a good deal about how to keep fit and healthy through diet and exercise and put this understanding into practice. Some parents are concerned that the school does not provide enough opportunities for physical education and sport. However, the school's promotion of active lifestyles is already good and it is exploring means of developing it further. It has the Activemark Silver award in recognition of its work in this area.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education not only because of their very good personal qualities but also through their attainment of high academic standards. Standards have been maintained at an exceptionally high level in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. In 2007, there was a dip in the results in writing in Years 2 and 6 although overall English standards remained significantly above average at the end of Year 6. The school is tackling this dip in pupils' performance vigorously. It is taking much effective action, for example, through the provision of more focused and challenging teaching for the more able pupils in Year 6. Some excellent writing is resulting from an increased focus on this area in links with other subjects, particularly history.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year where the provision meets their needs well. Many parents are delighted with the way in which their children settle in quickly and make good progress. The big picture is that progress is good across Years 1 to 6 because teaching is good. However, teaching and learning are better in some year groups and classes than in others, particularly in writing. Pupils make the most progress when teachers focus sharply on what different groups of pupils should learn in each lesson or series of lessons. There are many strengths in the teaching. In a lesson for the lower ability group in Year 6 in mathematics, for example, the teacher's expectations of pupils were high but the activities were pitched at the right level and were not too difficult. As a result, learning moved on well and pupils knew that their understanding of co-ordinates was increasing.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science but it also does so much more. It is outstanding because it contributes a significant amount to pupils' development as confident and articulate young people. Parents refer to the 'fantastic activities on offer'. There are weeks with a special focus, for example, on developing pupils' understanding of the diversity of cultures, faiths and customs in modern society. Three opportunities for pupils to go on residential visits do a good deal to support learning in areas of the curriculum, such as history in Year 4, as well as contributing to personal development.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities provides pupils with the chance to excel outside lessons. Over 100 pupils in Years 3 to 6 are members of the school choir and this is reflected in the high standard of singing during assemblies.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good and some aspects, such as pastoral care, are outstanding. Pupils feel safe at school and say that adults do not tolerate any form of bullying. There are good features to the academic guidance. Marking is often helpful, telling pupils clearly what they are doing well and how they might improve their work, but this is not consistent across all classes. The school has rightly recognised that pupils also need to be given clear guidance through targets to help them to take more responsibility for their learning. The school is taking well thought through action to put in place targets that will challenge each pupil in writing and also support teachers in accelerating pupils' progress.

The headteacher, who has been in post for only a short while, is building on the school's strengths and moving it forward. In the words of one parent, she 'has taken up the role with confidence and energy'. She is sharp and analytical in evaluating the school's effectiveness and has good support from other staff in key positions. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are seeking to increase their already good involvement in helping the school to improve. The school has strong capacity to become even more effective.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents speak of the 'caring attitude of staff' who are 'welcoming and approachable' helping their children to get off to a strong start in the Reception Year. They explain that their children enjoy school from the outset, for example, being 'enthusiastic about the topic style work'. The teaching of basic skills is focused and accurate and teaching assistants are deployed particularly well to support children with relatively lower attainment on entry or who find learning difficult. Teaching is good and so is the curriculum, with a balance of adult-directed activities and those that children select for themselves from a range provided. As a result, almost all children reach the standards expected and a high proportion exceeds these standards by the end of the Reception Year. The teacher in charge of the Foundation Stage is very clear about how provision could be even better and is focusing on improving the use of assessment data to meet children's individual needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers always focus sharply on what different groups of pupils should learn in each lesson or series of lessons.
- Give all pupils clear guidance through targets and marking to help them take more responsibility for their learning.

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

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?	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Powell's C of E Primary School, Cirencester, GL7 2DJ

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. Powell's is a good school and it has some features that are outstanding.

It does a tremendous amount to support your personal development and well-being. As a result, you are mature and sensible young people. You told me that you enjoy school hugely, that everyone gets on well together, and that the older pupils do much to look after the younger ones. You make an excellent contribution to the school and to the wider community. You care about important issues such as the environment and global warming and are proud of your school's Green Flag award.

Your behaviour is excellent and you are keen and eager to learn. You know a lot about healthy eating, keeping fit through exercise, and how to stay safe. All the adults in school look after you well.

You are very well prepared for your next school. This is not only because you have such good personal qualities but also because standards are high, particularly in mathematics and science. Teaching is good and the curriculum is outstanding. You have lots of exciting opportunities, including clubs and visits. You are so lucky to have three opportunities to go on residential visits. I am sorry not to have met those of you who are in Year 5. I hope you had a great time in Devon.

Your new headteacher is doing a very good job. She is working well with the other adults to make sure that the school becomes even better. To help your school to be even better, I have asked the adults to work on two things. These are to:

- make sure that all teachers think carefully about what different groups of you need to learn in each lesson or series of lessons
- give you clear guidance through targets and marking to help you to take more responsibility for your learning.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by remaining such pleasant young people. Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger (Lead inspector)

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