

Pencombe CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116907
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	312442
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Anthony O'Malley HMI

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	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Foster
Headteacher	Chloe Evans
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	Pencombe Bromyard HR7 4SH
Telephone number	01885 400255
Fax number	01885 400255

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Inspection number	312442

© Crown copyright 2008

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: teaching and learning, pupils' personal development, the curriculum, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with children, staff and governors also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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.

Description of the school

Pencombe C of E Primary is much smaller than the average primary school. A recent proposal to close the school caused significant distress within the local community. The proposal has been withdrawn until 2011. The great majority of pupils are of White British background. The school has gained the Activemark Gold, Artsmark Gold, Healthy School Gold Standard and Basic Skills Agency 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

This is a good school. It has many outstanding features. The school has a strong Christian ethos and parents value the emphasis on not only academic achievement, but also on helping all of the pupils to become happy and confident individuals. The result is that pupils are outstandingly well equipped for the next stage of their education. As one parent wrote, 'I have a very happy and secure little boy who enjoys everything school offers him.' Central to the school's success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. She is committed to ensuring that everyone in the school can and will succeed, both academically and in developing their personal skills. This, along with her skill in shaping an imaginative curriculum that links exceptionally well with the local community, means that pupils, staff and parents feel valued and have a strong sense of being part of a 'family'. Pupils make good progress irrespective of their gender or ability. Standards in the 2007 national tests were exceptionally high at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and currently standards are well above average. Pupils do particularly well in reading because of the teachers' ability to engender a love for books and the very strong links with parents, who recognise that they are key partners in their children's learning. Teaching in the school is good. Excellent relationships and generally high expectations result in highly motivated pupils, keen to tackle challenging work. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to find lively and imaginative ways to engage the interest of learners. For example, they carefully plan scientific investigations using the school garden, the trees on site and the local pond that are both fun and meet the range of abilities in the mixed-age classes. In most, but not all, lessons, the learning aims are very clear. Occasionally, however, the most able pupils have to complete tasks that lack challenge before tackling activities that really stretch them. Pupils know what they need to do to achieve their learning targets. Marking is often very good and gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. There is an outstanding curriculum and this makes a strong contribution to the pupils' excellent personal development. A wide range of clubs ensures that the children excel at sport and music. This year, the football team won the local tournament, the Golden Trophy, for the first time in over thirty years! In addition, a carefully planned programme of educational visits and visitors deepens the pupils' awareness and understanding of life in other localities, both near and far. Particularly impressive are the opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 to take responsibility for research activities, such as the school's travel plan, and projects that help them gain experience of business enterprise. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and reflects the excellent care, guidance and support provided. The school has an outstanding record for helping pupils who have been very unsettled in other schools to become confident and successful learners. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and her small team have successfully kept a clear focus on high quality teaching and learning during the recent months when the school's future has been the subject of much discussion. She receives outstanding support from the governing body, whose commitment and concern for the well-being of the pupils, and for the future of the school, are exemplary. Subject managers have a good knowledge of the curriculum areas they are leading and have made relevant plans to improve further. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is generally accurate but it does not sharply identify the areas of relative weakness that, if addressed, would lead to outstanding achievement. A recent improvement has been the establishment of a better system for tracking pupils' progress to support the setting of challenging targets. This will allow senior leaders to rapidly identify underachievement and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. It is just one example of the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start at school their skills, knowledge and attitudes are above the levels expected for their age. They make a good start to their schooling in the mixed Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class because teaching is good and they receive a curriculum appropriate for their age. Imaginative use is made of the opportunities for learning outside the classroom. High quality assessment, using photographs, observations and notes, helps to build a picture of each child's achievements. Children make particularly good progress in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development, with almost all achieving well above the expected goals for learning by the end of the Reception Year. Writing has been weaker, but the increased focus on teaching children to link sounds and letters (phonics) is increasing the pace of progress in this area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Identify more sharply through monitoring and evaluation the aspects of teaching and learning that need to improve to enable the pupils to make outstanding progress.

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.

Annex A

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?	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?	1
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?	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?	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	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	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

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

8 May 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Pencombe C of E Primary School, Bromyard HR7 4SH
Thank you very much for helping me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to several of you and finding out how well you are doing. You are rightly very proud of your school. Pencombe is a good school with many outstanding features. You try very hard and make good progress in your work. When you leave in Year 6, you are ready to succeed at secondary school because you achieve well in English, mathematics and science and are keen and confident learners. Throughout the school day, you behave very well and take great care of one another. I was also impressed with all that you do to help others, particularly your young pen friend in Sri Lanka. You told me how important it is to eat properly and get involved in sports. I was delighted to visit a school where playing cricket is so popular! When I met some of you at playtime, it was clear that you feel extremely safe and happy at school. The quality of teaching is good and your curriculum is full of interesting activities such as pond dipping and visits to local farms. The way teachers agree targets for improvement with you also helps your progress and helps your parents to give you extra help when you need it. I am sure that you will continue to look carefully at your targets and do your very best to achieve them. I was very impressed with the work of your headteacher. She has helped everyone in the school stay optimistic during the recent uncertainty about the future of the school. I have asked her to check even more closely on teaching and learning so that all staff are clear about what can be improved to help you make even better progress. I hope that you continue to be happy at school and carry on working hard. Best wishes Anthony O'Malley Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pencombe C of E Primary School, Bromyard HR7 4SH

Thank you very much for helping me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to several of you and finding out how well you are doing.

You are rightly very proud of your school. Pencombe is a good school with many outstanding features. You try very hard and make good progress in your work. When you leave in Year 6, you are ready to succeed at secondary school because you achieve well in English, mathematics and science and are keen and confident learners.

Throughout the school day, you behave very well and take great care of one another. I was also impressed with all that you do to help others, particularly your young pen friend in Sri Lanka. You told me how important it is to eat properly and get involved in sports. I was delighted to visit a school where playing cricket is so popular! When I met some of you at playtime, it was clear that you feel extremely safe and happy at school.

The quality of teaching is good and your curriculum is full of interesting activities such as pond dipping and visits to local farms. The way teachers agree targets for improvement with you also helps your progress and helps your parents to give you extra help when you need it. I am sure that you will continue to look carefully at your targets and do your very best to achieve them.

I was very impressed with the work of your headteacher. She has helped everyone in the school stay optimistic during the recent uncertainty about the future of the school. I have asked her to check even more closely on teaching and learning so that all staff are clear about what can be improved to help you make even better progress.

I hope that you continue to be happy at school and carry on working hard.

Best wishes

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector