

Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121492
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314008
Inspection date	14 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Jones
Headteacher	Mrs S Moore
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	Foston York North Yorkshire YO60 7QB
Telephone number	01653 618265
Fax number	0

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The school was inspected by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils at this very small rural school are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Although the school serves an area of very little social deprivation, pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a statement to support their special educational need. Pupils' skills on entry vary from year to year because of small numbers joining the school. In recent years there have been several unavoidable changes of leadership and staffing. The current acting headteacher took up post in September 2007. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age group classes, Reception to Year 3 and Year 4 to Year 6. At present, there are no children in Year 1. Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection and are predicted to fall again in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Foston Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. It is at the heart of the community. Parents and pupils hold very positive views of the school and parents' feelings are summed up by a typical comment, 'Foston helps children to flourish and I have seen my child's confidence and self-esteem noticeably improve.' Parents also speak highly of the improvements being made by the acting headteacher.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children's skills overall are typical for their age when they start the Reception year. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by the end of Year 6 but they vary from year to year. This is owing to the small numbers in each year group and variations in the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They have good relationships with one another and trust and respect staff. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Attendance is excellent and pupils enjoy school.

Overall, whilst the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, there are elements of good teaching. Teachers plan lessons well so that the needs of all pupils are met. Lessons provide a range of activities for pupils but sometimes opportunities are missed for teachers to question pupils deeply about their work and occasionally the pace of lessons is slow. As a result, learning slows. Pupils are confident and all are considerate and caring of one another and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The curriculum is good. It is increasingly being matched to pupils' interests and allows them to see the links between subjects. For example, pupils' progress in writing is good as a result of curriculum initiatives to develop writing skills in other subjects. The curriculum also extends pupils' understanding of different cultures, and research in restaurants related to the topic of healthy eating has developed pupils' knowledge of the world of work. The overall care, guidance and support provided by the school are good.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory but improving. The acting headteacher has brought stability and renewal to the school. The school's self-evaluation is good and the acting headteacher is clear where improvements are needed. New initiatives have already had an impact on improving the curriculum, the quality of teaching and learning and the guidance pupils receive about how to improve their work. However, these initiatives have yet to impact on improving pupils' standards and achievement in all subjects and in all years, especially in English, mathematics and science. The school's encouragement of pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), allied to developing social skills and growing awareness of business enterprise, gives them a good preparation for their future economic well-being. The recent improvements at the school confirm the effective steps taken by the leadership since the last inspection and that there is a good capacity for continued improvement. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage is satisfactory. There are very few children in this age group each year. Nevertheless, they integrate well and benefit from learning alongside older pupils so that they learn to listen attentively and concentrate on their work.

Teachers work hard to provide a range of experiences for children and are innovative in the way they create role play areas. However, opportunities are currently limited by the shortage of resources and the lack of easy access to the outdoor area. This reduces time for pupils to play and to learn together and to have choice in their activities. High priority is given to laying the foundations for developing later literacy skills through a well planned practical approach to teaching sounds and letters. This has helped children to develop confidence to talk about their experiences. Good records of assessment build up a clear profile of children's progress. These show that children, given their starting points, make satisfactory progress by the end of the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning so that they reach national expectations at the end of the Foundation Stage. The leadership of the acting headteacher is key to recent improvements in the Foundation Stage curriculum and plans are in place to improve resources and access to the outdoor environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 represent at least good achievement for pupils.
- Improve teaching for all groups of pupils so that it is at least good.
- Improve the resources in Reception, as well as children's access to the outdoor area, so that they can make choices in their learning both inside and out.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, standards vary from year to year because year groups are very small and the performance of one pupil can have a disproportionate impact on overall test results. Standards in the 2007 Year 6 national tests were well below average, but historically standards are broadly average. Unvalidated results for the 2008 Year 6 national tests show that current standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory progress overall. School data indicate that pupils are making good progress in writing as a result of curriculum initiatives to develop writing skills in other subjects. This was reflected in pupils achieving Level 5 in English, mathematics and science for the first time. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because they receive suitable guidance in their learning from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly, play well together and care for one another. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, including an appreciation of other cultures. They have a good awareness of right and wrong and their behaviour in class and around the school is good. They thoroughly enjoy school and are keen to learn. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of keeping safe, especially when they walk together through the village to take lunch. They adopt healthy lifestyles, especially in their choice of meals and in their enthusiasm for exercise. Pupils willingly take on responsibility, for example as members of the school council. Pupils contribute well to the community by singing and managing stalls in the local fete. Their good personal and social skills allied to their understanding of the world of business

and work, as fostered through their research and stall-holding, prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with a clear understanding of what pupils will learn during the lesson. This is particularly effective where it is linked to improving pupils' work in identified areas of weakness. Work is well matched to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities and ages. There is a range of activities to engage pupils and encourage them to work individually or with partners, for example in the use of drama strategies to explore characters in English. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and includes detailed comments. These indicate clearly how well pupils have done and what they must do to improve further. Teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they can access the curriculum and make satisfactory progress. However, there is sometimes too much input from teachers and opportunities are missed for pupils to engage quickly with their learning. Consequently, in these lessons there is a lack of pace and pupils do not make the progress necessary to compensate for gaps in their knowledge. Teachers use questioning well to ascertain what pupils already know but they do not always allow opportunities for pupils to extend their ideas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with a growing emphasis on literacy and numeracy that is beginning to impact on pupils' progress. There is also good provision for ICT and well directed personalised support where necessary. A thematic approach encourages pupils to see the links between subjects and this has been used well to improve pupils' writing skills. There is also a strong emphasis on work that develops pupils' understanding of other cultures. There is a strong provision for physical education and science, which is especially well developed through good links with the local secondary school. This and the developing provision for creative subjects increase pupils' enjoyment of school. An excellent range of activities outside lessons, including visits to outdoor centres and the research done in local restaurants, also enhances pupils' enjoyment and their understanding of the world of work. Extra-curricular activities are limited in such a small school but the school has addressed this by developing links for sports and competitions with other local primary schools and pupils appreciate the opportunities these links offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's Christian values inform its care for pupils. All members of staff know pupils well and are aware of their needs and how to meet them. There are effective relationships with the many outside agencies who work with the school so that the needs of vulnerable pupils and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can be quickly identified and met. All parents who responded to the parental questionnaire are strongly supportive of the school and what it provides for their children. The health and safety of all pupils are paramount and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements

meet government requirements. A good personal, social and health education programme is effective in supporting pupils' personal and emotional development and raising their awareness of how to keep fit and healthy. The school supports pupils well when they first start school and when they move between phases of education. Close social and academic links with the local secondary schools ensure that pupils are prepared for their new school. Reports for parents are clear and informative about pupils' progress and set clear targets for improvement. The school has introduced rigorous tracking and assessment systems. These are used well to inform planning so that work can be matched to pupils' individual needs. Pupils know at what level they are working and what their learning targets are. Although this has not yet had time to impact on standards and achievement it has helped older pupils to make more rapid progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory but progress made in the past year under the leadership of the acting headteacher represents an improving picture. Self-evaluation is good. The acting headteacher has a clear vision of where the school is and what needs to be done to improve it, for example in the development of outdoor provision for the Reception class and in the changes she has introduced to the curriculum which already have improved pupils' writing. She has brought stability to the school and introduced strategies which have begun to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the guidance pupils receive about how to improve their work. However, much is recent and still to impact on pupils' overall standards and achievement. She is increasingly well supported by the governors, who are developing their critical role. The acting headteacher has encouraged teamwork and involved other members of staff in key initiatives. While she has closely monitored and supported the development work managed by other teachers, the temporary nature of the staffing has prevented more rapid progress in key areas, such as improving standards. However, staffing issues have now been resolved and the school is in a good position to make further improvements.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

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

Thank you so much for making me welcome when I inspected your school. Foston Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school. The staff care for you well and help you to learn because they want to make your lessons fun and exciting.

I was pleased to see that you work hard and do your best. You come to school on time and your attendance is excellent. You behave well in lessons and in the playground. I found that you are very polite and helpful and I enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told me that you enjoy coming to school and that you like your teachers. You said you appreciated the activities the school provides for you, such as the visits to outdoor centres and sporting activities. Your parents and carers like the school very much, especially the way your teachers care for you and help you to enjoy your learning.

I have asked your teachers to do three things to make your school even better.

- Make sure that you continue to improve results in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- Improve your lessons so that you all learn at a faster rate and have more opportunities to think harder about your learning.
- Improve the resources for children in Reception, as well as their access to the outdoor area, so they can choose whether to learn inside or outside.

You can help by always doing your best.

Thank you for all your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.