

Pickhill Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121510
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314016
Inspection date	10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rudy Pearce
Headteacher	Mrs R Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	The Green Pickhill Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 4JL
Telephone number	01845 567339
Fax number	0

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	10 January 2008
Inspection number	314016

© 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 Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of developments to improve writing in Years 3, 4 and 5; actions to curb the year-on-year fall in standards in Key Stage 1; and the quality of teaching. Evidence was gathered from: discussions with pupils in Year 2 and Year 6, the headteacher and the chair of governors; observations of parts of lessons; an analysis of school documentation and its self-evaluation form; samples of pupils' work and the parental questionnaire returns. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

Pickhill is a very small school with two mixed age classes. The area it serves is mixed socially and economically. Pupils are mainly White British. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low. No pupil is eligible to have a free school meal.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pickhill is a satisfactory school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Based on their above average starting points, all pupils achieve satisfactorily and maintain above average standards by the time they leave school in Year 6. There is some underachievement in Key Stage 1 and in the groups of younger pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. The school is beginning to tackle this.

The small number of pupils in each year group means that the interpretation of national assessment data needs to be made with some caution. Standards fluctuate considerably year by year. Children's skills are generally above nationally expected levels in language, literacy and mathematical development by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. There has been a decline in standards in Key Stage 1 in the past few years, particularly in writing but current standards in Year 2 are broadly average in writing. Too much of the pupils' work was completed on worksheets which restricted their progress in writing. Raising standards in this subject is a school priority and pupils are beginning, for example, to write captions to label their work and make less use of worksheets. There are further actions planned now there is a new subject leader for English. In the most recent national tests Year 6 pupils maintained their above average results. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally well supported in lessons by experienced and effective teaching assistants and they achieve satisfactorily. The pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

The majority of parents are happy with the school. This is reflected in comments such as, 'The school actively promotes a relaxing family atmosphere.' However, a minority expressed concerns about communication and supervision of their children.

Pupils keep fit and are well prepared for the next stage of their education as a result of the strong partnership with local secondary schools and the use of various specialists to coach pupils in a wide range of sports. Pupils understand that activity and healthy eating are vital for a healthy lifestyle. They praised the improvement to school meals and mentioned the increase in the numbers of their friends now having a hot meal instead of sandwiches. Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They like the friendliness and say they get a lot of help because the staff are approachable. Responsibility is encouraged and well reflected in the decisions taken by the school council, for example, to have 'no football days' on the playground. Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around school because pupils are proud of their school and enjoy it.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Relationships are good. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enrich learning and enjoyment. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons and contribute sensibly and appropriately when they understand what to do. Well-qualified teaching assistants are a good asset because they provide well-judged support for small groups of pupils in each class and use their skills appropriately. For example, a group of pupils involved in a design project benefited from this during the inspection. Sometimes work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' capabilities, which limits the progress they make. This is particularly the case for the youngest pupils in each of the classes. Pupils' work is regularly marked but does not always provide enough

information to help the pupils know what to do to improve. The school has recently introduced target cards to rectify this situation. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well included in all that the school offers. Those few pupils learning English for the first time have

appropriate external support. The curriculum is satisfactory. A high priority is given to promoting the pupils' ICT skills. The introduction of theme weeks is beginning to link subjects together. Links with the local community are good and centre regularly on the local church. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. All pupils and their families are well known to the staff and pupils care for each other effectively. The school has been made aware of some safety issues.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Target-setting is realistic and based on an analysis of pupils' standards and progress, especially in writing, and this is helping to improve achievement. However, it is not always matched by rigorous monitoring and evaluation. This results in some discrepancies in the achievement of different groups of pupils and some over generous judgements made on the school's own self-evaluation. Governance is good. Governors are enthusiastic and have a clear vision for school improvement. They continue to challenge as well as support the headteacher. Arrangements to ensure that all staff are vetted to work with children are in place. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in most areas of learning, but less so in personal, social and emotional development by the time they start Year 1. The children work alongside pupils in Key Stage 1 and generally have access to planned work that is satisfactorily matched to the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, the provision does not readily provide opportunities for independent learning because of the lack of resources. Access to the full curriculum is currently limited because of building work and children are unable to extend their learning outside. Previous actions identified to improve the quality of provision have not resulted in sufficient improvement. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to write independently in order to improve standards in writing.
- Improve achievement in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the provision for the Foundation Stage.

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.

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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
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	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

Inspection of Pickhill Church of England Primary School, Thirsk, YO7 4JL

Thank you for making my visit to your school so enjoyable. I enjoyed the chance to talk to you about your work and your favourite activities. I have said that your school is satisfactory with some good features. You are very skilled at using computers and making colourful and informative tourist brochures. Your behaviour is good and everyone cares for one another. You are clearly very happy in school. Some of your work is very interesting and you go on many visits and have different sports coaches to train you.

I have asked your school to help you to improve your writing by making sure you do more of it and not use so many work sheets, especially in your infant class. It will be helpful for you all if your work is easier for you to do. The youngest children in school do not have enough play equipment or an area in the classroom that is just for them to learn in.

Thank you again and I hope you all continue to enjoy your time at Pickhill School.

Best wishes