

Sessay Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121514
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314018
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Robinson

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Hollins
Headteacher	Mrs J MacKle
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2005
School address	Sessay Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 3NA
Telephone number	01845 501239
Fax number	01845 501239

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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: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, the curriculum, the Foundation Stage (Reception), and leadership and management. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, examination of pupils' work, assessment data, interviews and documents. 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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school which has increased in size substantially since the last inspection following the unexpected transfer of pupils from another school in the locality. Almost all pupils are White British. The socio-economic circumstances of the local area are above average. Eligibility for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) is broadly typical of children of this age. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. The school is an Investor in People and has gained the Activemark, Basketball Mark, Football Charter, Healthy Schools and Quality Inclusion Awards. The school has maintained the Local Authority 'Highly Effective School' status since 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sessay Church of England Primary School provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Achievement and standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and exceptionally high by the end of Year 6. Not only do pupils succeed highly academically, but also their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is fostered exceptionally well. These major strengths prepare pupils extremely well for future learning and life. The key features in the school's undoubted success are the leadership and management of the headteacher.

The headteacher's leadership is first rate. Equally, the governors and staff contribute very effectively to the smooth running of the school. All senior managers have major responsibilities which they fulfil admirably. The leadership, including governors, are not complacent and actively seek to enhance provision further. In particular, they are working towards improving the accommodation. The extensive and attractive grounds are used exceptionally well to assist learning. The main school is too small to accommodate the present numbers on roll. Internally it has been upgraded sensitively to provide appropriate classroom and office accommodation while maintaining its magnificent external and internal beauty as a Grade 2* status listed building. Other classrooms and the canteen are 'temporary' buildings some of which have been on site since the Second World War. These temporary buildings are in need of replacement. The school has no hall for physical education or assemblies which means that learning time is lost when pupils have to walk a distance to the village hall for gymnastics or move furniture in a classroom for assemblies. Access to some of the accommodation is restricted for pupils with disabilities. The rapid increase of pupils on roll, from 66 to 92, in the past two years has also added to the immense pressure on the accommodation. The new pupils, many of whom travel by school coach each day from outlying areas, have been integrated into the school seamlessly. Their parents are highly delighted with the care and education of their children.

Despite the limitations of the accommodation, the quality of teaching and learning is superb. Pupils' learning is very well suited to meet their needs because of the consistency of high quality teaching which builds upon an exciting and highly creative, outstanding curriculum. Central to teachers' planning of lessons is the development of basic skills by linking subjects into themes, such as 'Farming'. Exemplary use is made of the outdoor accommodation, educational visits and visitors. These, together with high quality displays which celebrate pupils' achievements, develop pupils' skills and understanding as well as adding purpose and enjoyment in learning. Challenging activities are geared to pupils' levels of attainment. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and in small groups. Relationships between pupils and with staff are harmonious. Teachers and teaching assistants work as close knit teams to support all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given extensive support so most catch up academically and by the end of Year 6 reach national expectations. Pupils have a strong desire to learn and their behaviour and attendance are exemplary. The thorough checking of pupils' progress and the high aspirations of all staff helps pupils at all levels of ability to achieve exceptionally well. A particular success since the last inspection has been the improving standards in writing. Writing standards are now similar to those in other subjects. Overall standards have also risen by the end of Year 2 to well above average and have been maintained at their exceptionally high levels at the end of Year 6.

The school's capacity to continue to improve is excellent within the limitations of the accommodation. This is because of the strengths in leadership and all other aspects of the

school's work together with the consistency of its high performance. The school knows what it needs to do to maintain its great strengths and to improve even further. Parents and pupils praise all aspects of the school's work. This was encapsulated in a typical parental comment, 'We are delighted with our child's progress and the exceptional teaching and high standards.' Year 6 pupils stated, 'Learning is fun.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children have an outstanding start to schooling because teaching and learning and leadership and management are highly effective. The recently improved outdoor area provides wonderful opportunities for children to initiate and extend their learning. Best use is made of the indoor accommodation, which includes attractive displays, well organised resources and role play areas. Children's attainment on entry varies considerably because of the small numbers in year groups. Very few children have had nursery education though many attend local playgroups. A minority have had no previous social contacts with other children of their age. Children make exceptional progress relative to their starting points because of superb teaching and extensive curricular opportunities. Standards by the end of Reception are higher than those normally seen and most children are well prepared to work within the National Curriculum on entry to Year 1. Members of staff work particularly well together to meet the needs of all children. The monitoring of children's progress is thorough. Parents are very supportive and staff work hard to involve them in their children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek ways to upgrade the accommodation.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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

Inspection of Sessay Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Thirsk, YO7 3NA

I really enjoyed the day I spent with you. It was a privilege to inspect your school as your school provides you with an outstanding education. This is because it is led and managed exceptionally well by the headteacher who is very ably helped by the other staff and the governors. Your school knows what it needs to do to maintain its great strengths and to improve even further. However, I have asked the governors to seek ways to upgrade the accommodation. The temporary classrooms and canteen need replacing and you have no separate hall for assemblies and physical education.

You make superb progress in your learning because the curriculum is particularly well thought out. It has a strong emphasis on linking subjects into themes, such as the one you are doing now about farming. Excellent use is made of outdoor education, visits and visitors to add interest and purpose to your learning. As Year 6 stated, 'Learning is fun.' Your parents are pleased that you attend this school.

I was very impressed by your exemplary behaviour and interest in lessons. You told me that you enjoy being at school, feel safe and are proud of your school. Staff look after you extremely well and I was pleased that you all get on so well together. The standard of your work by the end of Year 6 is exceptionally high because you are taught really well throughout the school. I was particularly pleased to notice the improvements in your standards in writing throughout the school and overall standards by the end of Year 2.

I appreciated talking to you about your work and watching you learn. I trust that you will continue to work with the staff and your headteacher to help them to continue to improve the school. I wish you well for the future.