

Polebrook Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121987
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314180
Inspection date	8 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Edwards
Headteacher	Kathy Orchard
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Main Street Polebrook Peterborough PE8 5LN
Telephone number	01832 272319
Fax number	01832 272319

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the local village community in which it is situated but draws increasingly from further afield. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing and is above average. In some year groups, it is nearly 50%. The attainment on entry is below average especially in literacy and numeracy, although pupils often begin with good personal and social skills. The regular handful of pupils who join the school mid-way through their education often have learning difficulties or are not as far ahead in their learning as pupils already at the school. This has a significant adverse impact on the overall attainment levels given the small size of the school. The school provides education for a small number of children from Traveller communities who regularly spend the winter months in the local area. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has achieved Artsmark and Activemark Awards and working towards a nationally recognised ICT (information and communication technology) Award.

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 which provides well for its pupils. Good quality teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start to their education, making good strides in their learning. Standards are broadly average by Years 2 and 4 but pupils do well from their starting points, improving their reading and writing particularly rapidly as they move up through the school. Initial progress in mathematics is good but tails off a little as pupils move into Years 3 and 4. This is largely because many pupils are not confident about solving the increasingly complex problems they encounter as they get older. The school has put in place a new calculation policy to help address the issue, but acknowledges it has further to go. On the whole, pupils are not as good at enquiry, investigation, problem-solving, and reasoning as they are at reading or using computers. However, the curriculum is currently being adapted well to address these issues in pupils' skills.

The curriculum is good overall because it supports learning well and makes a strong contribution to the good personal development and well-being of pupils. The arts curriculum in particular helps pupils to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy sporting activities. They understand about personal safety and their responsible behaviour contributes well to a safe and caring environment. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy school immensely. Their participation in school activities is good, especially when they are actively involved. Pupils readily accept responsibility and carry out various roles around the school such as class monitors. Care, support and guidance are good. Because of the small size of the school, staff know pupils and their families very well. Consequently, pupils' individual needs are catered for with great care and consideration so that all thrive. Overall, pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

The school has worked hard to develop comprehensive systems for assessment and for tracking pupils' progress. This information is used well to plan appropriate work and to set challenging - often very challenging - targets, which pupils usually meet. Teachers provide pupils with good oral feedback but written feedback is inconsistent.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides a clear direction for development. Governors are very supportive and are actively involved in the school's work. They provide good oversight of its effectiveness. The school's assessment of itself is accurate. The information from these assessments is used well to focus energies on improving provision in the areas that will have most impact on pupils, for example the school's current work in improving pupils' skills in problem-solving in mathematics. Some subject leader roles are well developed, but others are less so and hence have less influence on improving the school. This is partly due to the difficulties of managing a small school and partly because recent changes in staffing have led to reallocation of subject responsibilities. Hence, some leaders are relatively new to their roles. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, pointing to good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Consequently, children make good progress, often reaching standards that are a little above average by the end of their Reception year. A good curriculum ensures that

all areas for learning are covered well and children are provided with practical activities through which to develop their learning. Staff model language well but do not always give children enough time to respond to questions. The purpose-built outdoor area is well used to support learning. Assessment procedures are good and pupils' progress carefully observed. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with more opportunities across the curriculum to improve their enquiry, reasoning, problem-solving and investigation skills.
- Improve subject leadership roles so that they are more influential in developing pupils' skills and raising standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average by the end of Years 2 and 4 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. They have been higher in the past but there has been an increase in the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities over the last few years. Nonetheless, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress and the progress is especially strong in reading and writing. Pupils write particularly well when they are composing factual accounts, such as in history or re-telling a story. Their creative writing is less strong. Generally, pupils function well when they are working within familiar territory. It is when they are asked to think beyond their personal experiences that their learning can slow down. Consequently, they cope less well when asked to use skills such as those of enquiry, reasoning, problem-solving and investigation. This puts a slight brake on progress in subjects such as mathematics and science, especially by the time pupils are in Years 3 and 4. The school has adjusted the curriculum to address this issue but is aware that further work is necessary to enable pupils to make even better progress. Good quality displays highlight pupils' success in subjects such as art and history.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and form strong relationships with one another and with adults. They work well together and on their own. However, older pupils sometimes show signs of being over-competitive and younger pupils can become overly excited. Nonetheless, pupils' enjoyment of school is very evident. Children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly into new routines. Behaviour around the school is good, even when pupils are not directly supervised. Pupils are very good at entertaining each other and making up games in the playground. The Christian ethos of the school contributes well to their good spiritual and moral development.

Pupils are sociable and make friends easily. Cultural development is strong through the arts curriculum and pupils are learning to appreciate the cultures and faiths of those different to their own. They have very good knowledge of healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating, and translate this well into practice even though the school has no facilities to provide cooked meals. Good behaviour contributes to a strong sense of community. Consequently, pupils feel safe. Given the good progress they make in basic skills, including in ICT, pupils are well prepared for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good, including in the Foundation Stage, and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individual pupils and it is clear to pupils what they are expected to learn. Teachers establish good relationships and manage behaviour well, enabling them to create a good work-centred learning environment. Activities are interesting and engage pupils well in their learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed to give support, especially to lower attainers. It is clear that teachers have high expectations of pupils and pupils readily rise to these and want to do their best. In the best lessons, there is lively interaction with pupils. Occasionally, pupils are not given enough opportunities to speak or the pace of work slows towards the end of a lesson. Marking is regular but inconsistent in the way it is used to inform pupils on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad curriculum that is rich and stimulating. It is particularly strong in the arts. There is a very deliberate emphasis on providing a wide range of learning experiences, both in school and through visits and visitors, to broaden pupils' thinking. These also contribute well to pupils' personal development. Good progress has been made in developing links across subjects and pupils have good opportunities to develop their writing and use of computers in subjects across the curriculum. Assessment is used well to orientate the curriculum to pupils' learning needs. For example, a new calculation policy is helping to address the issues in pupils' problem-solving skills. Science is in the process of being developed further in terms of giving pupils more hands-on and practical experiences to develop their investigative skills. Planning is beginning to identify cross-curricular skills such as problem-solving and enquiry. Good provision for physical education and sporting and other activities after school promotes pupils' enjoyment, health and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well looked after and cared for. Health and safety procedures are robust in making the school safe, and proper child protection procedures are fully in place. Appropriate background checks are made on those working in the school. The school is well supported by outside agencies.

Considerable efforts are made to consult parents and involve them in its work, contrary to the views of a few. Overall, parents hold the school in high regard. Academic support and guidance are developing well. Pupils have clear goals for improvement in English and mathematics, which they like. These are based on accurate assessments at the beginning as well as the end of a unit of work. Records of achievement provide good feedback on pupils' learning. However, pupils are not aware of their National Curriculum levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school well and sets high standards for its work. She has successfully created a strong sense of team spirit and all staff are working towards commonly understood goals. There is a strong focus on pupil achievement. Hence, pupils' progress is diligently tracked and swift action taken where underperformance is detected. Rigorous checks ensure that the school's work meets high standards. Teachers are provided with very helpful and detailed feedback on their performance. However, the bulk of responsibility for overseeing the quality of the school's work falls on the headteacher, partly because of the small size of the school and partly because not all subject leadership roles are fully developed. Governors work well in partnership with the headteacher and school. Many are relatively new but are developing their roles well under the supportive and expert guidance of the chair of governors.

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	3
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?	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	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?	2
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?	2
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	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

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

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Polebrook C of E Primary School, Polebrook, Peterborough PE8 5LN

We enjoyed our time at your school very much and we particularly liked visiting your classrooms and talking to you. We would like to thank you very much for making us feel welcome.

The school is providing you with a good education. You make good progress because the teaching and the work planned for you is good. The school is run well and you are given good care, guidance and support. Some of the most important features about the school that are good include the following:

- you enjoy school and are responsible in the way you behave
- children in the Reception class get a good start to their education
- you work hard and achieve well, especially in English
- the school provides you with a rich and interesting curriculum
- the staff take good care of you and look after you well and, as a result, you feel safe and happy at school
- your headteacher leads the school well and makes sure that it keeps improving.

There are some things that could be better. These are:

- improving your skills in areas such as problem-solving, thinking through difficult or new ideas and investigation work
- developing the roles of subject leaders so that they are more involved in helping the headteacher to make the school even better.

You can certainly help by continuing to work hard and, in particular, focusing on getting better at solving problems in mathematics, exploring how things work in science and becoming more creative in your writing.

We wish you all well in the future.

Gulshan Kayembe Lead inspector



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Lead inspector