

Paxcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126483
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315569
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanna Pike

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin McGregor
Headteacher	Liz Bannister
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Ashton Street Trowbridge BA14 7EB
Telephone number	01225 762244
Fax number	01225 774412

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that of most schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has risen to slightly above the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The school has gained Healthy Schools status, Intermediate International Schools Award, Bristol Standard and Football Federation Award. The school manages a breakfast club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Paxcroft is a satisfactory school. It has some strong features. Good provision for pupils' personal development and well-being, as well as effective pastoral care, results in pupils having very positive attitudes to their learning. Their behaviour is outstanding around the school and in lessons, where they work very hard. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. They enthusiastically take part in the wide variety of opportunities to exercise, including the whole school 'Wake and Shake' sessions. Pupils (The Pax Squad) actively demonstrate their extremely good understanding of healthy diets by growing vegetables for the school kitchen.

Pupils make satisfactory progress from when they enter the school in the Foundation Stage to Year 6. Standards in current Year 6 are broadly average. In Year 2, standards are broadly average and results have been rising over the last three years, with reading being significantly above average in 2007. Standards in current Year 2, although broadly average, are lower than in 2007, reflecting the larger proportion of less able pupils and those with learning difficulties. Nonetheless, most pupils have made satisfactory progress.

Whilst the percentage of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected levels in English and science is similar to that of 2007, standards in mathematics have dipped. This is largely due to there being a larger proportion of pupils in this group who find learning in mathematics more difficult. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in mathematics and science is likely to be in line with national averages but below them in English. The school has rightly identified writing as a priority for development.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers create a positive ethos and this, together with good relationships, results in pupils being keen to contribute in lessons and 'have a go' when they find work hard. At the start of lessons, pupils are told what they are going to learn and do, but sometimes have too few opportunities to reflect on their own learning during the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers share with pupils the small steps they need to make in the lesson, and involve the pupils in assessing how well they have done. Consequently, pupils achieve well. This good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

The quality of marking varies across the school. Pupils do not always have a clear idea of what they have achieved and how to improve. Pupils are sometimes unable to remember what their targets are and these are not always referred to sufficiently in lessons.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership. She has accurately identified the key priorities for the school and created a clear direction to achieve these which is shared by staff and governors. Although a monitoring programme is in place, this is not yet rigorous enough in consistently helping to identify weaknesses and improve practice. Subject leaders have contributed well to improving the curriculum, but have yet to focus sufficiently on raising achievement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Reception class with attainment in line with that expected for their age. Over the year, they make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning, with some good progress in communication, language and literacy. Teachers plan well to meet children's needs but the school recognises the need to improve provision for creative development. Children enjoy their lessons and are confident to try new activities. The school has developed effective

links with parents who also volunteer to help in the classrooms. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Foundation Stage leader and other staff carefully track children's progress and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. For example, although outside learning opportunities are provided, the fact that there is not a covered area inhibits these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that teachers focus on what pupils are going to learn in each lesson, and why, rather than the tasks they will complete.
- Ensure pupils know what they have achieved, and that they understand the next steps they need to make to improve further in mathematics and writing.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that monitoring identifies and supports areas for development.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Results in Key Stage 2 national tests have fluctuated over the last few years between average and significantly above average. This reflects the differences in the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as inconsistencies in the quality of the curriculum prior to the previous inspection. The school's focus on raising the attainment of more able pupils has been successful so that over the last three years, the numbers of pupils reaching the higher level in mathematics and science have increased to be in line with national figures. Strategies to improve writing, such as the focus on sentence construction and the storytelling project, are beginning to have a positive impact. Pupils with learning difficulties have made good progress with reading and writing as a result of the 'catch up' programmes; however, this does not yet extend to mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average and pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown in the high rates of attendance. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about practical activities and enjoy taking part in the good range of clubs. Pupils feel safe and understand the importance of keeping themselves safe, especially when using computers. They say that they can turn to adults when they have concerns, and are confident that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and pupils develop into mature and considerate young citizens. Relationships are a strength of the school and pupils learn to understand their own and others' feelings. Events such as 'What a performance' have a significant and positive impact on pupils' cultural development. Pupils make a good contribution to the community; for example, older pupils help younger pupils on arrival and at breaks. The school council gives pupils an effective voice and members make good suggestions to improve school life. Pupils work well together and enjoy collaborative work and organising events such as discos and stalls for raising money. These strengths, together with their satisfactory achievement

in literacy and numeracy, means they are being soundly prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy the interesting activities which teachers plan for them. Effective links between subjects enhances this. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 worked out areas of the sides, base and ends of tents in a mathematics lesson, and then used these later in planning their shelters in design and technology. The pace of lessons is usually brisk but in some lessons teachers talk for too long, and pupils are not given enough opportunities to explain their ideas. This slows learning. Teachers are effective in challenging more able pupils, though sometimes the challenge for less able pupils is not appropriate. Teaching assistants are particularly effective when working with small groups helping pupils to 'catch up' in reading and writing. However, teachers do not always effectively deploy teaching assistants during whole- class sessions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked successfully in improving the continuity of the curriculum across the whole school and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, some weaknesses remain in mathematics, particularly in Years 4 and 5. Links between subjects are being used well to help pupils apply their basic skills, as well as to enthuse them. Pupils' basic skills are further enhanced by effective provision in ICT. Good sports provision contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment and health. Pupils also benefit from learning French and other languages. The good links between literacy and foreign languages are helping to strengthen pupils' communication skills. A wide range of enrichment opportunities such as clubs, trips and visitors as well as a good personal, social and health education programme all contribute well to pupils' good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good pastoral care ensures that pupils feel happy, safe and secure. One parent said, 'My child is always happy and loves going to school.' The school is vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety. The school works effectively with external agencies and organisations to provide good support for pupils when this is required. Thorough and effective procedures help children to settle in quickly when they join the school, and similarly when they move on to secondary school. Pupils with learning difficulties are given good support to improve their literacy. However, the school recognises the need to provide more support for pupils who fall behind in their numeracy skills. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The way that targets for pupils are set and used is not consistent, nor do pupils receive regular useful feedback on what they have achieved and how to improve. Older pupils benefit from the good feedback they receive from their termly writing assessments, but as yet this good practice is not extended.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has built a team of senior leaders who are working well together in raising achievement. They have correctly identified key priorities for the school and put in place strategies to address these. However, monitoring of teaching, although regular, is not rigorous enough in identifying weaknesses and addressing them. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Subject leaders have a clear role. Regular monitoring of their subject has helped improve planning, but has not yet focused sufficiently on pupils' progress. The recently introduced closer tracking of pupils' progress is helping the school identify underachievement more swiftly and take action. It is also beginning to be used to evaluate how effective this action has been. Improvements in writing in Years 4 and 5 suggest that the school's actions are having a positive impact and consequently the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further. The school has set itself some challenging targets for the future to help raise expectations and achievement further. Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Governors are improving their skills and knowledge so that they are becoming more proactive in asking searching questions to challenge the school.

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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	3

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	1
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	1
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	3

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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Paxcroft Primary School, Trowbridge BA14 7EB

It was good to come and see you at your school. Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during the school's inspection. We especially enjoyed the good discussion we had with some of you. We learned a lot. I think you would all make very good future inspectors! Right now, your school is giving you a satisfactory education. Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:

- You work hard in lessons and make sound progress. You reach expected standards. You and your teachers are making sound efforts to improve this further. Your standards in ICT are above average.
- Your personal development is good. You enjoy your time in school. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. Your behaviour is outstanding and you have a strong sense of responsibility.
- Your teachers have been busy working hard to improve things. They provide satisfactory teaching.
- Your teachers work hard to give you a good curriculum which includes good opportunities to learn about foreign languages and take part in sport.
- The school does a good job to make sure that you all feel safe, settled and secure.
- Your headteacher is doing a satisfactory job to help everyone work together and to make sensible plans with the staff and governors to improve things.

To improve further, the school should now:

- help you to achieve even better by making clear in lessons the small steps you need to make;
- help you to know how well you have done and understand how to improve your work;
- make teaching even better by sharing with teachers what they need to do to improve their practice

Thank you again for all your help.

Joanna Pike Lead Inspector