

Piper's Vale Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132836
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	316036
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Goodchild
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Pert
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Raeburn Road Ipswich IP3 0EW
Telephone number	01473 320413
Fax number	01473 320414

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school. The area served by the school faces significant economic and social disadvantage and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is much higher than usual. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the percentage who speak English as an additional language are above average. The number of pupils who start or leave the school at other than the expected times is much higher than usually found. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those that have statements of special educational need is well above average. The school provides a family learning programme and a breakfast club as part of its extended provision. It also has full Healthy Schools accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Piper's Vale is a good school, providing good value for money. Pupils and adults alike are valued and treated equally. The provision to support pupils' emotional development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school and greatly appreciate the quality of education they receive. One pupil commented, 'Teachers help us a lot and make lessons fun'. The Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education. Standards in English, mathematics and science, whilst below average are improving steadily each year. These rising standards are the result of good teaching and learning; consequently, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well and make good progress.

Pupils' behave well and their personal development and well-being are good. Care, guidance and support are also good, enabling pupils to become increasingly confident learners, especially those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the work set for higher attaining pupils is sometimes not hard enough for them. At times teachers do not communicate clearly what they expect pupils to learn. In turn, this sometimes prevents pupils from understanding fully what they need to do to make their work even better. The curriculum is good and pupils benefit greatly from a wide range of additional activities that enhance their learning well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher receives good support from an effective leadership team, who are dedicated to the school's continued development; consequently, the capacity for further improvement is good. Governors are very supportive, but arrangements for them to keep a close eye on and evaluate all aspects of the school's work are not sufficiently structured or rigorous. Parents and carers are pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. The school's Family Learning Programme is very effective, helping parents and carers to support their children's learning. One parent, reflecting the comments of many said, 'My child is very happy at Piper's Vale. We are kept well informed and find all staff friendly and helpful'. Links with partner providers who support pupils' development are also a very strong feature of the provision. The school has addressed the issues identified at the time of the last inspection successfully and improvement since that time is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. On entry the children's skills are much lower than those expected for their age. Effective liaison with parents helps children settle in well to the routines and procedures. In the Nursery, staff swiftly assess children's abilities and work hard to address their learning needs. The focus on children's ability to communicate and on their personal and social development is particularly effective. Children with additional learning needs are supported very well. By the end of the Foundation Stage standards are still lower than expected nationally. However, most children make good progress, although this is limited for some because they have less experience in Reception than their peers. A good range of carefully structured learning activities are organised for children, and these underpin their future learning. Progress is particularly good in reading, but improvements in writing are not as pronounced.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set work for higher attaining pupils that is always hard enough and helps them to attain the standards of which they are capable.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about what teachers expect them to learn and are involved fully in understanding what they need to do to make their work even better.
- Put in place systems that are sufficiently structured and rigorous for governors to evaluate all aspects of the school's work thoroughly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and make good progress. In recent years standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been well below average, reflecting the current position. Pupils' progress has also tended to slow down in years 3 and 4. However, the school recognised this and focussed closely on raising attainment in English and mathematics, so pupils in these year groups and throughout the school now make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have tended to be below average and this is still the case. Even so, this represents good achievement, given pupils' starting points. Those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also achieve well. Based on robust assessment information the school sets suitably challenging targets for attainment that it is usually successful in meeting.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Sometimes a minority of pupils behave inappropriately and are, at times, boisterous. On such occasions, behaviour management by teachers, teaching assistants, the learning mentor and the behaviour support assistant is consistent and exemplary. Attendance is below average, but the school is doing all it can to encourage improvement.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Adults provide excellent role models for the pupils in terms of treating each other with care and respect and pupils follow their example. Pupils make a good contribution to their community. They eagerly take responsibilities; for example, playtime leaders, playtime pals and members of the school council are very proud of the role they fulfil. They know how to keep themselves safe and understand the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily, as shown by the award of healthy school's status. The help pupils receive to acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and their good social skills mean they are well placed to benefit from their future education and to contribute to their economic well-being in adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. All staff have high expectations of the pupils, and this encourages good behaviour, contributing to the purposeful atmosphere of the school. Good use is made of skilful teaching assistants and a learning mentor. They provide high calibre additional support for pupils, especially those who find learning more difficult. This enables

lower ability pupils and those with learning difficulties to make good progress. Teachers assess pupils' attainment accurately, supporting learning well by identifying misunderstandings and helping pupils to overcome them. However, in a few instances teachers do not provide pupils with enough information about how to improve their work and on occasions learning objectives are not made sufficiently clear. At other times some pupils tend to be passive and lack independence, relying too much on their teachers. When this happens their progress tends to slow down. Even so, teachers are particularly skilful at ensuring that pupils make good progress in basic skills, such as speaking and listening.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good foundation for the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The school has devised a curriculum with activities that appeal greatly to pupils and increases their willingness to learn. It operates over a two-year cycle and ensures good coverage for all pupils. The school makes strong links between subjects. Teachers successfully bring the curriculum to life and pupils say they enjoy their learning. Very good opportunities exist for less able pupils to make good progress, but sometimes higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. The excellent programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is having a very positive impact on their personal development. A good range of additional sporting activities and educational visits successfully enhances pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Current requirements to ensure pupils safety and protection are fully in place. The school takes its duties in this respect very seriously. Provision for pupils' emotional and social development is outstanding and lays the foundation that enables pupils to make the best of their educational opportunities. The support for potentially vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is superb. Pupils have targets for their learning and progress; however, these are not always matched closely enough to their needs.

There are good arrangements to consider and respond to the views of pupils and to those of parents and carers. The support provided for pupils often extends to their families and this aspect of the school's work is outstanding. For example, the 'Community Room' is a very popular meeting place for parents and carers and enables them to become knowledgeable about the work of the school. It also provides a venue for partner providers, such as the community police officer and the school nursing team, to lead activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school evaluates the quality of its performance accurately and is good at identifying what needs to be improved. The collaborative style of leadership of the headteacher ensures that all staff are involved in these processes. Some additions to the senior leadership team are relatively recent. However, they undertake their duties effectively. Staff with additional responsibilities, such as key stage leaders and the teacher who oversees provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities

provide very effective guidance and support for their colleagues. Arrangements for the continued professional development of staff are very good, enabling them to keep abreast of and make the best of current developments.

Governance is satisfactory. The headteacher and staff greatly appreciate the support governors provide and governors represent the interests of their community very well. Whilst they take a great interest in the work of the school, arrangements for them to evaluate its quality are not sufficiently rigorous or structured. Finances and resources are managed very well. For example, governors have invested wisely to create a strong team of teaching and support assistants.

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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?	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?	1
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	3
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	3

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	2
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	1
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	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**

23 September 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Piper's Vale Primary School, Ipswich IP3 0EW

Thank you for making Mr Jones, Mrs Lowery and myself so very welcome when we visited your school recently. We certainly enjoyed talking with you. We think your school is a good and know that you and many of your parents and carers think so too. We are impressed particularly by the way in which the school works in partnership with your parents and carers to help you to learn as well as you can.

Mrs Pert and the staff are good at making sure you are safe and able to make good progress. They are brilliant at making sure that those of you who sometimes find learning hard receive all the help you need. We are very pleased to see how hard you work during lessons. We are also delighted to see how you take responsibility and are willing to do jobs and help around the school. We know there are times when some of you do not behave as well as you should, but we are very impressed by the ways in which all the staff are helping you to improve your behaviour.

Mrs Pert, the staff and your school governors are good at using the school's money to make sure that you have all you need to do well. We have asked Mrs Pert and the staff to try to make your school even better by doing the following.

- Always giving work, to those of you who sometimes find learning easy, that is hard enough for you and helps you to make even better progress.
- Making sure that you are clear about what teachers expect you to learn and are involved fully in understanding what you need to do to make your work even better.
- Putting in place systems that will help your school governors to check on and measure how successful the school is in its work.

Keep on working hard, doing your very best and enjoying your time at school.

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector