

Pennington Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115983
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326302
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Gehane Gordelier HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Corden
Headteacher	Mrs Diane O'Grady
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 December 2005
School address	Priestlands Road Pennington Lymington SO41 8HX
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited 10 lessons, held meetings with governors and staff, and spoke to pupils. The work of the school was observed; this included scrutinising samples of pupils' work, school data, management and curriculum documentation, teachers' planning and responses from 40 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the school's work on improving rates of attendance
- progress made by different groups of learners, with a sharp focus on reading and writing especially for lower-ability boys, as well as the progress made by the more able pupils in mathematics
- the rigour with which data and assessment information are analysed and used to inform planning at all levels to help raise standards
- the quality of management documentation and the extent to which it focuses on the intended outcomes for learners and includes success criteria that are challenging and measurable.

Information about the school

Pennington Infant School is smaller than average. It is situated in a market town in a predominantly rural part of the New Forest. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is well below average; however, the proportion with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs are moderate and relate mainly to language and communication skills.

The school admits up to 60 children into the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, this is currently under review and is due to be reduced. There are six classes organised into single-age groups. The school is receiving increasing numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups, although the proportion is currently well below average. The turnover of pupils is lower than in most schools and staffing is stable. The headteacher has been in post since January 1991 and the deputy headteacher has been in post for over 20 years. The school has received the Activemark and the Healthy School Award with enhanced status.

The school provides an Early Bird club for parents who work and need to bring their children to school before the usual start to the school day. The local pre-school, junior and secondary schools all share the same site. Most of the children who attend the pre-school transfer to Reception at Pennington Infant School. A parents' committee runs the pre-school independently.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school's mission statement 'Living, learning and playing together' accurately reflects the school's positive, happy and supportive learning environment. The school is well led and managed on a day-to-day basis, and the headteacher provides good leadership and management. This ensures that staff and pupils feel valued and well supported, and contributes to the school's outstanding work with parents. One parent stated, 'I feel the school is very good at supporting parents with their children's learning and actively encourages family learning'. Teachers know their pupils well and the positive relationship between staff and pupils contributes very well to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good personal development and well-being. Teachers work hard to make learning fun and relevant to pupils' interests and needs. However, while there are pockets of good practice in the school, pupils do not always progress as well as they could. The school has worked hard to develop a creative and stimulating curriculum, but there is not sufficient guidance within curriculum plans to help teachers plan lessons that are always precisely matched to the needs of all pupils. Consequently, strategies to support some of the lower-ability pupils are not used consistently well, particularly in reading and writing. Teachers at times underestimate what the more able pupils are capable of achieving, particularly in mathematics.

The headteacher has recently improved the rigour with which the school tracks and monitors pupils' progress. This is helping staff and governors become more aware of standards and progress. Although the school knows most of its strengths and areas for improvement, the quality of self-evaluation is not sufficiently robust. Existing procedures do not focus sharply enough on the intended outcomes for groups of learners of different ability and success criteria are not always measurable. The school has made satisfactory progress since the time of its last inspection and continues to demonstrate that it has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is more consistently good throughout the school by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve particularly in writing and mathematics
 - ensuring curriculum and daily planning is more precisely matched to the different needs of pupils.
- Ensure those involved in self-evaluation focus sharply on the intended outcomes for different groups of learners and use success criteria that are measurable.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

The progress pupils make as seen in lessons and in their work is satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 2, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties as well as those with English as a second language, reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with national averages. Standards are better in mathematics than they are in reading and writing, but fewer pupils than is the case nationally, attain higher levels in all three subjects. Boys attain as well as girls in mathematics, but less well in reading and writing. They also perform less well in writing than boys nationally.

Some pupils make good progress particularly in their reading, number work and in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are usually attentive and well behaved. Where this is less evident, it is usually because learning does not meet their needs precisely enough. Pupils work well together and demonstrate the ability to work independently. They respond well to teachers using visual aids such as the interactive whiteboard and at times this helps to accelerate the pace of learning. However, in mathematics, there is not always sufficient use of practical resources to support pupils' understanding, and the more able pupils are not encouraged to develop and use a range of strategies, for example in calculation, to help them solve problems. Pupils benefit from discussing their work in pairs and as a group, but this approach is not always used before writing activities; this reduces pupils' progress when writing. Furthermore, pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to use what they know about letters and sounds to help them to write unfamiliar words.

The extent to which the more able pupils progress, although satisfactory, is not always as good as it could be. This is because extension activities are introduced only in the latter part of lessons and because teachers' expectations are not high enough. When pupils lack confidence about how to improve their work this can also slow the rate of progress in lessons. Teachers often repeat learning intentions during the course of lessons, but rarely ask pupils to repeat these for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well

as their peers. At times, they make good progress in reading and in mathematics. However, progress in writing is less good. This is because targets for improvement are not always sufficiently specific. There are also missed opportunities to use ICT to support pupils, especially low-ability boys, with basic literacy skills.

The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they feel safe and know they can talk to an adult if they need to. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to be healthy and the school council contributes very well to promoting healthy eating. Pupils appreciate being asked for their views and they make a positive contribution to improving their school community. They develop the basic skills they need to be successful in the next stage of their learning; this includes developing good ICT skills. Pupils make particularly good progress in their social development and are sensitive to the needs of others. They learn about other cultures and faiths, but their awareness of the different cultures within multicultural Britain is less well developed. The school has worked very hard to improve levels of attendance which for some pupils are lower than they should be. As a result, the attendance of targeted pupils is improving, although too many parents still take their children on holiday during term time.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The school prides itself on child-centred learning and creativity across the curriculum. This approach ensures that learning is meaningful and purposeful and teachers are improving their ability to link subjects. A good example was seen in Year 2 when the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to display a painting to teach pupils how to use adjectives and nouns to describe what they could see. Staff endeavour to ask questions that will help pupils develop their thinking skills. However, all too often, teachers do too much of the talking during lessons instead of drawing information

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

from their pupils. This often limits the extent to which teachers identify how well pupils are progressing and how quickly some pupils could progress to the next level. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, but teachers are not always sufficiently familiar with age-related expectations for all subjects. Consequently, the quality of daily planning is too variable and does not include sufficient detail about the different levels of learning. Reference to how the different needs of pupils will be met is often scant. The school is developing strategies to help pupils take more responsibility for their learning, but this has yet to become firmly embedded. The quality of marking is variable. Although much guidance is provided orally to pupils, older pupils are not always provided with sufficient written guidance to help them remember how to improve their work. The school has improved the way it teaches reading and this is leading to higher standards. However, teaching of letters and sounds is not yet sufficiently systematic or rigorous for all pupils, and at times learning in this aspect of the school's work is out of context. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to lessons. This helps pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate and contribute fully. This targeted support also enables some of the more vulnerable pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning, good behaviour and improved self-esteem and confidence. The school provides a broad and exciting curriculum, with a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is enriched through various clubs. Pupils benefit from close links with the local community, for example in developing their appreciation of historical events. However, curriculum guidance does not always include sufficient detail about progression in learning and this is unhelpful to teachers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	3
Support, guidance and care	3

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a close working partnership between the school and its governing body. Governors challenge the school about progress and standards, particularly relating to writing. They are, however, not sufficiently well informed about all their statutory duties. The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity; all government requirements for ensuring the safety of children are in place. Leaders and managers are well informed about the context and needs of the local community and there is an effective strategy for engaging with the community. This has enabled the school to improve the quality of its work, particularly with those parents who previously were not sufficiently involved with the school or their children's learning. Leaders and managers at all levels are committed to helping the school to progress. Self-evaluation is considered to be at the heart of the school's ability to improve. However, the quality of self-evaluation at times lacks rigour because it is not sufficiently focused on the outcomes for pupils or the progress made by different groups of learners. Furthermore, documents used to communicate ambitions do not all clarify how pupils are expected to benefit and do not make sufficient use of

quantifiable targets to help drive improvement and raise standards. The school works very well in partnership with parents and this is improving the quality of pupils' educational experiences. A good example is the work with parents to enable them to be more effective in supporting their children with homework.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	3
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective links with pre-schools and parents enable children to settle quickly into the well-established routines in Reception. Staff make good use of the outdoor as well as the indoor areas to create an inviting and stimulating learning environment. Fun and exciting activities like planting, growing, cooking and then eating potatoes all contribute very well to children's learning. Children make good progress in developing their creative, personal and social skills as well as in their understanding of number. The areas in which children make the least amount of progress are in the development of reading and writing. Although the teaching of letters and sounds has improved, learning is not always sufficiently well linked to enable even the more able children to all make good progress in these areas. ICT is used well to help children learn number, but there are missed opportunities for it to be used for language and literacy activities. The progress that children make is regularly reviewed, but there is currently no tracking of the progress made by different groups of learners.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents are confident that their children are well looked after and they are happy with the progress their children are making. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the way it is well led and managed.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pennington Infant School, Lymington, SO41 8HX

I am writing to thank you for your help when I inspected your school and to let you know what I found out.

I spent time in some of your lessons and talked to some of you. I also looked at the work of the school and talked to many of the staff and some of the school governors. I was interested in what your parents think of your school, and I enjoyed listening to what you had to say.

The staff at the school work hard and the headteacher is doing a good job. The work of the school is satisfactory; these are some of the things it does particularly well.

- The way the school works with parents is outstanding.
- The way you behave is good and you work and play nicely together.
- You feel safe at school and you know how to be healthy.
- You help your school to be a happy and better place to play and learn.
- You have a good understanding of right and wrong and look after each other.

These are some of the things I have asked your school to do to help it to become even better.

- Make sure that more of your lessons are good, and that your teachers expect you to do even better, especially with your writing and in mathematics.
- Make sure the staff who are responsible for checking how well the school is working:
 - think about how the work of the school is helping all of you to learn
 - have a way of measuring the difference it makes to your learning when the school makes changes.

You can also help your school by continuing to do your best and by making sure you come to school when you are supposed to.

Yours faithfully

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector

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