

Furneux Pelham Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117394
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326596
Inspection date	5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	139
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anna Vrylandt
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Skelton
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Furneux Pelham Buntingford Hertfordshire SG9 0LH

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	5 June 2009
Inspection number	326596

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- whether pupils make consistent progress as they move through the school
- how effectively staff are involved in monitoring and supporting school development.

Inspectors gathered evidence from:

- observations of lessons
- scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and records
- discussions with pupils, parents, governors, the headteacher and staff
- scrutiny of school policies and documentation
- analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average village primary school draws pupils from a wide rural area. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is broadly typical for children's age. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are from a White British background and nearly all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who have a statement of special educational need, is well below average, with the largest group having moderate learning difficulties.

A before-school club is run by a private provider for an hour each school day.

The school holds a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Eco-school (silver), Primary Geography Mark, Sports Mark and ICT Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, where pupils thrive as the result of excellent teaching and learning and exemplary leadership and management. The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection and has a first-class capacity for further improvement.

Achievement is outstanding. Standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 and in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Since the last inspection, overall standards have been significantly higher than average at the end of both key stages because any slight variations are analysed rigorously and addressed. As a result, the upward trend in standards has continued. The excellent progress children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues through both Key Stages 1 and 2. The more able pupils receive highly effective challenge and those with learning difficulties get all the support they need in order to make excellent progress. Both boys and girls, including those from minority ethnic groups, achieve significantly better than similar pupils nationally. The school meets and regularly exceeds the challenging targets it sets based on pupils' previous performance because its systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying what they need to do next are highly effective. This is particularly beneficial in ensuring that pupils at risk of falling behind receive prompt support. Standards in art are also considerably higher than those normally expected of pupils at the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school shows clearly in their enthusiasm and active participation in all aspects of its work. Attendance is above average, although a small minority of parents continue to take their children on term-time holidays. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, evident in their active participation in sporting activities and their well-developed knowledge of healthy eating. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary and reflects their respect for each other and the high expectations of staff. Pupils know how to keep safe. They have an excellent understanding of matters such as road safety and Internet safety. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent. Based on the school's common values, pupils demonstrate both maturity and confidence in their understanding of the world around them. They take responsibility for various jobs around the school, including supporting the school's commitment to recycling and acting as playleaders for younger pupils. Through fund-raising, they support local, national and international charities and are proud to represent the school at sporting events. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their future lives by the high standards they attain in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and the excellent personal skills they develop.

Throughout the school, teaching is consistently good and has many outstanding features. In particular, planning takes very close account of pupils' different needs and builds skilfully on their previous learning. Teaching and support staff work seamlessly together and in this highly positive learning environment, pupils respond readily to the encouragement and guidance they receive. Working relationships are excellent and pupils derive great value from each session because staff use the time exceptionally well. Pupils work extremely well together, confidently settling down to, and sustaining their concentration on, the task in hand. They listen very carefully to instructions from adults and to what others have to say; their responses are detailed and express their ideas clearly. Pupils find their work challenging but achievable because they know what they are aiming for and are actively involved in checking how well they are getting on. At the start of lessons, teachers share well-focussed learning objectives with pupils and

clearly identify what they have to do in order to successfully meet these. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers give constructive guidance. Pupils particularly appreciate the 'Tickled Pink' and 'Green for Growth' which highlight their successes and what they need to do next to improve.

The school provides an excellent range of curriculum and other activities to meet the range and needs of pupils. The national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are well established and staff are successfully adapting these in response to their analyses of pupils' standards and progress. For example, the school has introduced regular sessions where pupils focus on developing their mental mathematics or problem-solving skills. Provision for ICT and meaningful links between subjects strengthen the curriculum further. The use of drama as a stimulus and regular, planned opportunities for pupils to write at length in both English and across the curriculum have further improved standards in writing. Working with its partner schools and providers, the school gives pupils a rich variety of sporting, arts and other activities that complement and extend its basic provision. These are well supported by pupils who particularly enjoy opportunities to participate in activities with pupils from neighbouring schools.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and is instrumental in ensuring that all pupils have full access to all that the school offers. Staff know their pupils extremely well and the deployment of classroom support staff as lunchtime supervisors provides a much valued continuity through the school day. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and comply fully with current requirements. Staff training in first aid and child protection is up to date. Risk assessments for the school premises and off-site activities are thorough and ensure that pupils work and play in a safe environment. The school has excellent links with outside agencies and its partner providers and is highly valued by parents. Systems for monitoring attendance and tracking pupils' progress are exemplary: a particular strength is the half-termly 'Feedback Friday' when pupils discuss their progress in literacy and numeracy with staff and agree individual targets for the next period.

The headteacher's vision and clear direction for the school's development, with its strong focus on each child achieving their best in both their personal and academic development, is excellent. The strong and hard-working staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and they perform these very well. They are highly involved in quality self-evaluation, which is firmly based on analyses of standards and progress, and robustly informs forward planning. Priorities are ambitious but realistic and there are rigorous systems in place to monitor and evaluate the school's progress towards these. The governing body is well informed about the school's work through written reports and first-hand evidence from discussions and observations with staff. Parents comment positively about improved communication with the school and the accessibility of governors. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. A thorough analysis of its context has helped the school to develop its provision. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the common values underpinning the school's work. They make a significant impact on the local community through their involvement in village life and participation in arts and sporting activities in the wider area. Pupils have a well-developed knowledge and understanding of world religions and cultures, and demonstrate a high level of respect for the differences and opinions of others. The development of themed weeks where work across the curriculum has focussed on different parts of the world, such as Europe or China, is helping to develop pupils' deeper knowledge and understanding of the global dimension.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with an excellent start at school. On entry to the Reception year, children's have a wide range of skills and experiences: overall, these are broadly in line with the expectations for their age. The school works closely with parents to ensure that children settle happily into school routines. In this extremely well-managed setting, children's achievement is outstanding. The excellent staff team know each child exceptionally well and maintain simple, but highly effective, records that track each individual's progress. They use this information skilfully in detailed planning that focuses closely on the next steps in children's learning and provides an exceptionally wide, varied and stimulating range of adult-led and independent activities both inside the classroom and in the outdoor area. Provision for outdoor learning is currently good. The building of a new classroom has been the source of great interest and imaginative play for children but, for reasons of safety, access to the outside area has had to be closely supervised. In the short term, this has reduced the spontaneity of their choices. Children listen very carefully to instructions and follow these closely, selecting resources and helping each other without having to be asked. They maintain their interest and concentration extremely well, and take pride in explaining what they have done and how well they think they have got on. By the time they move to Year 1, most children exceed the expected levels in all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage that enables children to choose freely and move independently between indoor and outdoor activities.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

8 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Furneux Pelham Church of England Primary School, Buntingford, Hertfordshire
SG9 0LH

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school recently and, in particular, for telling us so much about your work and all the other activities you are involved in. You get on exceptionally well with adults and each other, and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. You certainly know a great deal about keeping fit, healthy and safe and, through your involvement in sports, arts and fund-raising activities you make an important contribution to the village and wider communities.

We think your school is outstanding. You work hard in lessons and do extremely well. The standards of work at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are much higher than average and your results are improving each year. This is the result of excellent teaching and learning. You are very much involved with your teachers in checking on how well you are getting on with your work. They give you really good advice about what you need to do next to improve further. You know your individual targets really well and value the opportunity to review and update these on 'Feedback Fridays'. Keep up this good work!

Mrs Skelton is an excellent headteacher and she has lots of ideas to improve the school further. The staff and governors work hard alongside her and have done well to have the new, permanent classroom built. To ensure that everyone is safe, those of you in Reception have had to be extra careful when using the outside area. Once the builders have gone, we are asking your teachers to develop the outside area so that you can move more freely between activities in and out of the classroom.

You have all played your part in making Furneux Pelham a highly successful school. You can help it get even better by continuing to work hard and to enjoy your time there.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours truly

Mike Best

Lead inspector