

# Puller Memorial, Church of England, Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117453
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326614
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Milton

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	61
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Debbie Morley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Elizabeth Aitken
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 February 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	High Cross Ware Hertfordshire SG11 1AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01920 463178
<b>Fax number</b>	01920 860930

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 February 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds in this small rural school. About half live near the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A below average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The range of their needs includes emotional and behavioural difficulties, medical problems and difficulties with spelling and reading. When they join the school, children have the skills and knowledge expected for their ages. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of a morning Nursery group and a Reception group. A teacher and nursery nurse teach these children in the same class each morning. In the afternoons, the Reception group joins the Years 1 and 2 class. The school has received the ActiveMark and Eco-School Bronze awards, and it has National Healthy School Status.

## 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. It has made good progress in all aspects of its work since the last inspection because of the headteacher's good leadership and the effective, hard work of the staff and governing body. As one parent wrote, 'The headteacher's leadership has dramatically improved the school.' The school consults parents and pupils effectively and knows its own strengths and weaknesses accurately. With good strategic and practical support from the governing body, the school has taken well-chosen action to remedy weaknesses. It has a good capacity for further improvement.

As a result, teaching and learning are good and the curriculum is outstanding. Clear step-by-step teaching and an effective match of work to pupils' differing learning needs are common features of lessons. There is good marking and target setting in a majority of lessons but pupils do not always know their next steps to improve their work. The good links between subjects, a very good range of clubs and a wide variety of visits and visitors make an important contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Together with children from two nearby small schools, pupils from Years 5 and 6 enjoyed the residential trip to Wales immensely. Pupils have a good involvement with the local village community and, for example, the gardening club helps maintain the nearby churchyard.

Pupils achieve well academically and in their personal development. As two parents wrote, 'We feel our children are given a good all-round education at Puller Memorial.' Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with the knowledge and skills expected for their ages. They make good progress and all usually achieve or exceed the expected standards when they start Year 1. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 2 their standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics and, by the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. However, an appreciable number of pupils do not develop a neat, joined handwriting style. Pupils who need additional help with their learning make good progress and achieve satisfactory standards by the end of Year 6 because of the well-planned provision to meet their different needs and the good quality individual support provided during lessons. The progress of individual pupils is carefully tracked in reading, writing and mathematics with follow-up action to address any underachievement.

Most pupils behave extremely well and the school provides good support for the few pupils who face behavioural and emotional difficulties. Pupils feel safe. The mixed-age 'buddy groups' make an important contribution to the excellent relationships. Many pupils are reflective and thoughtful and all are concerned about the well-being of others. Pupils know and share the school's values and all feel a part of the school's cohesive community. The ActiveMark award and National Healthy School Status recognise the contribution the school makes to pupils' excellent healthy lifestyles. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture and learn about other faiths and cultures. However there are limited opportunities for them to learn at first hand about children from other religious and cultural backgrounds in Britain. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being because of their good key skills of literacy and numeracy, their excellent social development, their work for the school and eco councils and the school's sound links with local businesses. All adults work hard to provide good levels of care for pupils. The care and support for vulnerable pupils is outstanding. Parents report that the headteacher and teachers are very approachable. Parents have been able to attend assemblies about pupils' work in English and mathematics, and then to visit classes where these subjects were taught.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make good progress during their Nursery and Reception years and all usually have or exceed the skills and abilities that are expected of five-year-olds when they join Year 1. Their personal, social and emotional development is strong because of the good levels of care, the high priority given to their safety and their very good relationships with adults. Good links with parents also help children to make good progress. During the inspection, children behaved responsibly in the large outside area when it was wet, cold and icy. They are learning to listen to each other and usually sustain their concentration well during tasks.

Teaching and learning are good. Adults interact with children skilfully. This fosters children's good language and personal development, and their engagement with learning activities. Occasionally there are missed opportunities to check children's understanding during a story and sometimes staff do not make sure all children are fully involved in an activity.

The well planned curriculum gives a good balance between activities that adults direct and those that the children can choose. The large, well-equipped outdoor learning space includes role-play areas for a bike shop and library. The large classroom has specific learning areas, including a garden centre role-play area, and the good resources are readily accessible to the children. Staff and governors have made recent good improvements to provision.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Secure greater consistency in pupils' understanding of how to improve their work in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting so that it is joined and regular and they can write more quickly and fluently.
- Develop pupils' first hand understanding and experience of children from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Between 2005 and 2008, Year 2 pupils' standards were above national averages. The current Year 2 pupils are making good progress and are on track to reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics next summer. Target setting has helped to establish a pattern of rising standards. Challenging targets are ensuring the current Year 6 pupils are making good progress and are on track to achieve standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Key Stage 2 pupils make consistently good progress because teaching is good. More able pupils also make good progress, whilst boys and girls achieve similar standards in both key stages. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology, preparing them well for the world of work.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are outstanding. This is reflected in their support for charities, excellent relationships with each other and adults, and understanding of right and wrong. As one parent wrote, 'They have been guided to become well-rounded, caring, responsible children.' Pupils have a sound understanding of the richness and diversity of culture

in Britain although more remains to be done to develop their first hand experience further. Pupils report that they feel free from bullying and other forms of harassment. To secure its Eco School Bronze award, pupils are involved in recycling, composting and saving energy. Consequently they are beginning to develop their understanding of sustainability. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. The 'buddy groups' include pupils from the school's full age profile and help to ensure that all pupils know and care for each other and play well together. A relatively large number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 secure the young leaders award and take responsibility in a number of activities including a Key Stage 1 multi-sports club. The healthy school lunches, weekly swimming for all pupils, and the many sports clubs and teams contribute very effectively to pupils' excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

A common feature of lessons across the school is good class management so that pupils are focused on learning. Teaching assistants successfully help pupils to learn during all parts of lessons including the whole-class sessions. Good levels of support for individual pupils help improve levels of achievement. Questions are used effectively, for example, to assess pupils' progress in mathematics and to involve pupils in developing a story as the teacher models the writing process. In the majority of lessons, there is good marking and advice to pupils about how to improve their standards. For example at the end of each unit of mathematics work, younger Key Stage 2 pupils assess their own progress and identify their own targets for improvement. However, their understanding of how to improve their science work is too general. Similarly older Key Stage 1 pupils know how to improve their work in writing but are insufficiently precise about how they can improve their mathematics.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The well planned curriculum is very effective in meeting the learning needs of all the pupils in the mixed-age classes. It is well enriched by a variety of themed days and weeks such as the Caribbean day and science week. There are extremely good links between subjects, such as the use of information and communication technology to measure aspects of the environment as part of science. Many pupils take part in the wide range of after-school activities. There are many visitors, such as a mountaineer when pupils were studying mountains, and a very good range of visits including one to a local pharmaceutical firm as part of science work. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is especially effective. Annually, a qualified professional teaches each class food technology. This includes links with local bakeries and contributes extremely effectively to pupils' learning about health and safety issues. The study of the proposed closure of a local post office gave younger Key Stage 2 pupils a good opportunity for citizenship education.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Staff know the needs of individual pupils extremely well and are committed to high quality care. The staff make every effort to involve vulnerable pupils fully in the life of the school and

to support their families as required. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and the school carries out the necessary health and safety checks. The effective support and guidance for pupils facing behavioural difficulties includes working with parents and external agencies as necessary. In each year group the progress of individual pupils is tracked carefully for reading, writing and mathematics towards their personal challenging targets. This tracking is used to identify and follow-up any underachievement. However, the gap between some tracking assessments is rather long and this hampers even quicker identification if a pupil's progress dips.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management at all levels are effective in providing good quality care and education, successfully raising standards since the previous inspection. As part of the improvement planning process, parents, governors and staff attend an annual school improvement planning meeting. The outcomes from this meeting feed into the detailed development plan. This plan is helping the school to improve many aspects of its work although it is not always sufficiently explicit about the expected improvements to pupils' standards. All at the school work hard to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in its life and work, and the pupils are committed to equality of opportunity too. Community cohesion is good with particularly strong links with the local community. Governance is good. The well led governing body is fully involved in self-evaluation and strategic planning and has made a strong contribution to the school's improvement. In addition, governors give much practical support to the school and have recently helped improve the indoor and outdoor learning areas for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which 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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Puller Memorial Church of England Primary School, High Cross SG11 1AZ

I really enjoyed visiting your school and meeting your headteacher, the chair of the governing body, the staff and many of you. Thank you for making me so welcome. It was good to talk to you in lessons, at lunchtime and in meetings with different groups including the school council, eco-council and Year 6 pupils. I was very interested to hear that the school council is helping the school to improve and that you are taking action to care for the environment. It was good to hear that you feel very safe at school, have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives and think the 'buddy groups' are a really good idea. The way that you think and care about other people is impressive.

You make good progress in learning English, mathematics and science. This is because teaching is good, you have interesting things to learn and the teaching assistants know a lot about helping you to learn. Although a lot of you are clear about how to improve your work, I have asked the school to help you all be clear about this. I have also asked the school to help you improve your handwriting so that you can write more easily and quickly.

The school is very good at helping you develop as people. You usually behave well and are keen to learn. Everyone takes good care of you and makes learning enjoyable through all the clubs, visits and visitors. You have good opportunities to work in the local community, including the links with other schools. The school already helps you understand the variety of beliefs and cultures within our country but I have asked it to give you more first hand experiences of this.

You can all help the school to improve by continuing to behave so well and trying to learn as much as you can. Also, you can try and improve your handwriting and think carefully about how to improve your work.

I wish you every success in your future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Milton

Lead inspector