

Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121476
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327497
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Graham HMI

The 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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Williams
Headteacher	Mrs M Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Arkengarthdale Richmond DL11 6EN
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited seven lessons, two assemblies, and a lunchtime club. She observed lunchtime arrangements and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, the School Improvement Partner and groups of pupils and parents. She observed the school's work, and looked at policies, school tracking and assessment data, planning documents the school's procedures for safeguarding, the school's development planning and external reviews of the school's work.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively teaching helps pupils of all ages and abilities to learn and make progress
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils in mixed-aged classes
- how effectively pupils are prepared for life in a diverse society
- the effectiveness of the provision made for the youngest children
- the impact of leadership and management.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than most primary schools. The headteacher teaches for 3.5 days a week and there is one full-time and one part-time teacher. There are two mixed-age classes, one for pupils in Key Stage 2 and the other for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The number of pupils in each year varies considerably, for example, there are 8 pupils in Year 4, but only one pupil in Year 3. The school serves a socially and economically advantaged area. No pupils are eligible for a free school meal. All pupils are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but none have a statement of special educational need. When children join the school most have attended a local Nursery. The school celebrates its 350th anniversary this month. The school has Healthy School status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark and an Inclusion Quality Mark.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School is a happy school, with a strong family atmosphere. The headteacher and staff know children and their parents well and provide carefully tailored care and support for every child. Parents value all that the school provides, but are particularly pleased with the way in which the school promotes pupils' confidence and, as reflected in a typical parent comment, 'brings out the best in them'. Parents who have moved into the area from elsewhere feel that the school has helped their children settle successfully into a new, and often very different, environment and make friends. The school is at the heart of its community and its involvement in local life does much to enrich the provision made for pupils. The school's forthcoming anniversary is providing exceptional opportunities to make the curriculum interesting and meaningful for pupils.

Pupils thrive in this vibrant atmosphere and their attendance is above average. The number of pupils taking national tests and assessments at the end of each key stage is very small so care must be taken when analysing data. Evidence seen during the inspection confirms the school's view that pupils make good progress. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are usually in-line with or above average and, given their individual starting points all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well by the end of their time in school

Teachers manage mixed-age classes well. The curriculum is planned carefully so that work is matched to the needs of different age groups and teachers' time is used effectively so that all pupils benefit from focused support. However, although the school has a reasonably secure understanding of pupils' attainment and of the progress they make from term-to-term, teachers do not use day-to-day assessment well enough. This means that, although the work pupils are given is suitable for their age, it is not always matched well enough to their ability. Pupils' work is marked regularly but marking is variable and does not always tell pupils how to improve or help them to eradicate weaknesses in their basic skills, particularly in writing.

Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards their work. They support each other in lessons and during other activities. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to school life. Older pupils run a lunchtime club for younger children, individual pupils lead assembly and all pupils take on demanding and worthwhile responsibilities within the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors manage the school well. Their hard work and commitment ensure that the school runs well on a day-to-day basis. School leaders

have resolved a difficult financial situation and they have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Given the very effective way in which this small group of people deal with all aspects of leadership and management and their focus on continual improvement, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by ensuring that:
 - teachers use the outcomes of day-to-day assessment to plan work which is accurately matched to pupils' abilities and needs
 - marking eradicates weaknesses in basic skills and tells pupils how to improve

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school and achieve well. They respond enthusiastically in lessons and answer questions coherently and at length. Pupils settle to their work quickly and work diligently on individual tasks and as part of a group. They are quick to help each other and they complete work to the best of their ability. They use information communication technology (ICT) very effectively to support their learning and to present work in a variety of ways. The school's location in a beautiful but remote part of North Yorkshire gives pupils a very good understanding of the natural world. Pupils have a secure understanding of their place in the wider community, and of the diversity of society, because the staff take every opportunity to widen their experience. They have ample opportunities to develop their individual interests and talents and they become interested and effective learners.

When they join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children can already do more than is typical for their age. The small number of pupils in each year group means that outcomes vary considerably from year-to-year. However, given their starting points, pupils make at least satisfactory and usually good progress by the end of their time in school. Most pupils attain the nationally expected Level 4 and many attain Level 5 in at least one subject. However, the school's own data shows that pupils' progress is not always consistent from year-to-year or in all subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in need of a little extra support achieve well because they are supported in school and teachers work very effectively with parents and other agencies.

Pupils behave well. They are aware of potential dangers and carry out all tasks with a high level of regard for their own safety and that of others. They are well-prepared for their future economic well-being and make an exceptional contribution to school and community life. They take on important responsibilities within the school and support a large number of school and local events. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles and the school helps them to understand why this is important. Pupils recognise their own good fortune and they are sensitive to the problems encountered by those who are not as fortunate as themselves.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers organise lessons well, ensuring that they spend time with all pupils. They plan lessons effectively to engage and motivate pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their specialist skills are used to good effect to enhance the provision made for pupils. Parents, governors and other adults help out in the school, offering their skills, or supporting the wide range of extra-curricular and in-school activities.

Teachers track pupils' progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and they have a reasonably secure understanding of their attainment, although some teachers' assessments are occasionally too generous. However, teachers do not use day-to-day assessment well enough, so that, in the core subjects, pupils do not always receive work which is matched to their ability and needs. Some tasks are not challenging enough and pupils do not always receive well targeted guidance which would help them improve their work and eradicate weaknesses in their basic skills. Marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work and when pupils are given this information they do not always have opportunities to act on the advice given. As a result, individual pupils do not always attain as well as they might in all subjects.

The curriculum is good. Provision for the core subjects is satisfactory, but the 'creative curriculum,' which includes most of the other subjects, is well-planned and provides very good opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The focus on art, music and sport, the introduction of a modern foreign language and the good support provided by staff and volunteers does a great deal to promote pupils' enjoyment of school and their interest in learning.

Pupils are cared for, guided and supported very well. They have very good relationships with the staff and with each other. The school identifies any potential problems at an early stage and takes prompt and effective action.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The staff share all aspects of leadership and management and they ensure that the school keeps up-to-date with new guidance and initiatives. Policies are reviewed regularly and the headteacher ensures that staff benefit from training and from opportunities to work with colleagues from other schools. The school's procedures to safeguard pupils conform to the latest guidance and thorough risk assessments are completed for all activities. The school works well with parents and the wider community and has effective partnerships with agencies, which promote pupils' learning and well-being and equality of opportunity.

The headteacher strives continually to improve the provision made for pupils. School self-evaluation is secure and school improvement planning is updated regularly. The small amount of leadership time available is used productively and, although some plans made to improve the school are not as detailed as might be found in larger schools, there is little doubt that the staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and are tackling the areas that need to be improved. The headteacher looks actively for opportunities to widen pupils' experience and to prepare them for their future lives. The success of her actions can be seen in the confidence with which pupils transfer to a large secondary school, the links with their own and the wider national and international community and the very positive ways in which they accept and value the differences between people.

Governors give a great deal of time to the school. They are well-informed and very supportive of the headteacher and her staff. This is particularly important and valuable, given the school's geographical context. The governing body has managed a difficult budget situation successfully and governors have ensured that the school is very well resourced. The school provides good value for money. However, governors admit that they spend a great deal of time discussing financial issues and, despite receiving a good range of information from the headteacher and School Improvement Partner, not enough time discussing educational matters and holding the school to account for its actions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school, they can already do more than others of their age. The school has productive relationships with the local Nursery and this ensures that children's transition into school is accomplished successfully. Many children are very familiar with the school, because they are welcomed in as they accompany older siblings to school. Children make good progress during their first year in school. Their inclusion in the Key Stage 1 class does much to promote their social skills and they join in happily with all activities. The teacher makes the most of the limited accommodation and, although opportunities for children to choose the tasks they will pursue are slightly more restricted than would usually be the case, children have opportunities to make choices and decisions within more formal activities. Whole-class activities are adapted very successfully for the needs of the youngest children and the children show good levels of independence and enjoyment of school. There are some missed opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their learning, for example, to apply their knowledge of letter and sounds in other activities. By the end of the Reception Year, most children are working above the levels expected for their age.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Fifteen parents returned questionnaires and all, bar one, were very appreciative of the work of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the way their children are cared for and supported and with the opportunities they receive.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 15 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 25 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	1	1	

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 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:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.



8 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School,
Richmond, DL11 6EN

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school last week. I enjoyed my visit very much. I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that I think your school is a good school. Your headteacher and the other teachers give you some quite exceptional opportunities to contribute to the development of the school and you carry out these tasks very sensibly. It is not surprising that you enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. I really enjoyed visiting 'Club, Club' and I was impressed with your beautiful singing and with how well you are contributing to the school's anniversary celebrations. I was also very impressed with your responses in assembly and by your concern for people less fortunate than yourselves. I enjoyed the assembly on Friday morning particularly.

You make good progress by the end of your time in school and you attain well. Your teachers plan for the mixed-age classes very successfully and you are all given work which is suitable for your age. However, although your teachers know how well you are progressing as you move through the school, they do not make enough use of the day-to-day information they have, so the work you are given does not always challenge you enough. You told me that the work you are given is sometimes quite easy and I could see that this was the case because you often get all of your work right. Although it is nice to be successful, you also need to be stretched and given work which you find a little more difficult. Some of your written work is a little careless and you make silly mistakes. This means that you develop careless habits and they could cause you to lose marks in tests. Although your teachers mark your work carefully they do not always tell you how to improve and, even when they do, you are not always given time to act on the advice given. I have asked your headteacher and the staff to see that these things improve.

I hope the anniversary celebrations go well and that you have fun recording the CD. I am sure it will be very popular.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C E Graham
Her Majesty's Inspector

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