

Pitsford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121850
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327582
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	John Horwood

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	55
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	Shane Atherton
Headteacher	Sonja Henman
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Moulton Road Pitsford Northampton NN6 9AU
Telephone number	01604 880866
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average primary school situated in a village on the outskirts of Northampton. There are currently 55 pupils, five of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, who are taught in three mixed-age classes. Numbers vary between year groups. Currently, the younger pupils are taught in one class and Key Stage 2 pupils are taught in two classes. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is very low although, as hot meals are not provided, actual numbers may be higher. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has obtained the Activemark.

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 which has improved in many areas since the last inspection. Parental views were typified by one comment which said, 'The school has a warm friendly ethos and the staff have cared for and taught my children very well.' Pupils enjoy school because teachers make lessons fun and everyone gets on so well together. Overall leadership and management are good. Success in raising standards since the last inspection demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further. Governors carry out their statutory duties and are very involved with the work of the school. The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is good and pupils develop a good and caring understanding of the world they live in. A large display board presents articles about people and events from the school, local, national and global communities to give pupils a good appreciation of various faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

Children enter school with skills and abilities which vary from year to year but tend to be around expected levels. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is outstanding and children make very good progress at the start of their education. Across the whole school, each pupil is supported well and given equal opportunities to make good progress in both their academic and personal skills. Standards have risen since the last inspection and are now above average by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils do exceptionally well in science because of subject expertise within the school. Teaching is consistently good and pupils of all abilities get good support in lessons from their teachers and the teaching assistants. As a result of the leaders' focus on equality, there are no variations in the progress made by any groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Good systems are in place to monitor progress and these are well used by teachers and leaders. The data are often used to plan the support that each pupil needs in lessons rather than to ensure the work provided exactly matches the pupil's individual need. Although this enables the pupils to make good progress, it does not encourage independent learning. Target setting is used well and most pupils are aware of their targets. The marking of pupils' work is regular and tells pupils where they have gone wrong. It does not give guidance on how to improve in order to meet their targets and there is no evidence that pupils respond to teachers' comments. The curriculum engages pupils fully through interesting and enjoyable activities. A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning and personal development.

Pastoral care is good, and safeguarding requirements, including internet security, are met fully. The school's strong links with external agencies ensure good support for pupils who find learning difficult for whatever reason. Pupils behave outstandingly well, enjoy school and know how to keep themselves safe. A parent wrote, 'I have been overwhelmed by the maturity and politeness of the pupils at Pitsford highlighted by the "buddy system" and generally in the school and the playground.' Levels of attendance are average because a few parents still take their holidays in term time. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, eat healthily and take part in sport with enthusiasm. The good basic skills they acquire, as well as their effective personal development, ensure they are well prepared for the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision is extremely well led and managed. Within the mixed-age class, the excellent relationships help children feel safe and well cared for. Staff are friendly and approachable and

there is a strong sense of teamwork. This ensures that the needs of the children are met consistently well. Children enter Reception with skills which are close to those expected for their age in most areas of learning but tend to be lower in communication and language. They make very good progress, particularly in developing their communication skills, and at the end of Reception standards are above average. Children's personal development is given strong and successful emphasis, as demonstrated by their confidence and independence. Equally, children's early literacy and numeracy skills are promoted very well. Teachers are very good at teaching new skills, while providing many opportunities for children to develop their independence through purposeful play. They very effectively use information on how well children are doing to plan work that is both interesting and stimulating. The organisation and planning are outstanding to ensure that children benefit from spending time with the older children while having sufficient opportunities to make use of the outstanding facilities that are available to them. The excellent curriculum, which is based on linking areas of learning together to maximise the effectiveness, makes full use of the both the indoor and outdoor areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the marking of pupils' work gives guidance on how pupils can improve their work and helps them achieve their targets.
- Use the teachers' good knowledge of pupils' abilities to match activities more closely to their individual needs and enable them to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Good progress is consistently demonstrated in lessons and in pupils' work. Standards can vary significantly year on year because of the small numbers in each year group. At the end of Year 6, pupils achieve above average standards. The progress made by all pupils is similar because teachers know the pupils so well and provide appropriate support for individuals. Writing has been the weakest area but this is improving as it is a school focus for improvement. The progress made in science is exceptionally high because of the good subject expertise the school has in this subject and because the pupils enthuse about practical activities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons because of good support from teaching assistants. The more able pupils are also making good progress and have extended opportunities through arrangements with other local schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through their outstanding behaviour and their respect for others, pupils show they know right from wrong. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is satisfactory. A few families keep their children away from school for extended holidays in term time and this affects overall attendance. Pupils particularly like the friendly way teachers encourage them to improve their work by making lessons fun. They know how to keep safe and to whom they should talk if they have any problems. Pupils said, 'Bullying used to occur but the current headteacher does not put up with it.' Pupils eat healthily during the day and are aware of what choices they should make for their packed lunches. They make

a good contribution to the school and wider community. In school, they enthusiastically take on responsibilities such as being school councillors and older pupils act as 'buddies' for the younger ones. Pupils take part in many activities to raise money for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good because all the staff have the same expectations and work together to achieve them. Pupils have a positive attitude towards learning and are attentive in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain things clearly so that all pupils understand. They make lessons interesting and fun. Teachers make good use of formal and informal assessment systems to monitor pupils' progress and they are very aware of the abilities of all the pupils. Thorough planning and effective grouping ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. However, this is often through well planned classroom support from teachers and teaching assistants rather than in ensuring that the work is well matched to each pupil's age and ability. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and older pupils are aware of their targets and what levels they are working at. Teaching assistants provide good support for those who need additional help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff have successfully developed a long-term curriculum plan which links areas of learning into modules that provide interesting and meaningful learning experiences for the pupils. It promotes enjoyment and achievement for every child, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Because of the difficulty for a small school to provide appropriate resources for the more able pupils, these are provided through joint activities with other local schools. The leaders understand the community well and broaden pupils' horizons through cultural links, special days and visitors to school from the community. The curriculum benefits from French being taught throughout Key Stage 2. Extra-curricular activities are popular and address a variety of interests including art, dance and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care of pupils is supported by strong links with external agencies. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are securely in place. Health and safety requirements are met. There are good systems for managing behaviour and monitoring attendance. All staff work well to ensure all pupils are included in activities, resulting in a harmonious community. Pupils who need extra help are provided for effectively and make the same progress as others. Academic guidance within the classroom is good with much improved assessment systems now in place to monitor progress over time. Marking of work is only satisfactory because it does not give enough guidance on further improvement. Pupils have targets in English and mathematics and, while teachers make it clear to them in lessons how to reach these targets, it is not always made clear in the marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is well supported by a very effective governing body and staff. They work together well as a united team with a common vision of improving the school to give pupils the best opportunities. Leaders have had a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, including teaching and assessment, which have resulted in raising standards. Actions from the previous inspection have been addressed and rigorous monitoring and evaluation now take place regularly. Other areas identified have been improved through the development of the revised curriculum. The school development plan is focused on raising attainment further and the setting of challenging targets has contributed to raising standards. Self-evaluation is accurate showing that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors have provided very good support on financial aspects during a period when the school was without key staff. Leaders and managers have shown an enthusiastic and well planned approach to promoting community cohesion based on a good understanding of what pupils and the community needs. While some areas are at an early stage of development, many aspects, especially within the school and the local community, are already good.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pitsford Primary School, Pitsford, NN6 9AU

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing how your school is helping you learn. We were impressed by how well you all get on together and how polite you are to visitors.

Your school is providing you with a good education and has improved since the last inspection. These are some of the good things about your school.

- You enjoy being at school and find your lessons are fun.
- The staff care about you and look after you well.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Your behaviour is outstanding.
- Teaching is good and you make good progress.
- There is a wide range of clubs, after-school activities and visits.
- There are effective systems in place to monitor your progress.
- Your headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your learning further.

In order to improve the school further, we have asked the headteacher to do the following.

- Ensure marking gives you advice on how to improve your work and how to reach your targets.
- Ensure that teachers use their knowledge of how well you are doing to always set you appropriate work so that you can learn to work on your own.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Horwood

Lead inspector