

Picknalls First School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 124142 |
| Local Authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 328065 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 July 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Susan Walsh |

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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| Type of school | First |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 317 |
| 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 | Rodger Mann |
| Headteacher | David Shooter |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 July 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Oldfields Road Uttoxeter ST14 7QL |
| Telephone number | 01889 256416 |
| Fax number | 01889 569938 |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
| Age group | 3–9 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 July 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. A number of class teachers, including some of those who are responsible for leading subjects, have recently been absent from school. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage through a Nursery and two Reception classes. Pre school provision is also available on site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is providing a good standard of education. It is extremely effective at encouraging pupils' personal development and well-being because it offers an outstanding curriculum that allows pupils to develop a wide range of skills while growing in maturity and confidence. Most parents are very pleased with what the school offers. They recognise the vast array of opportunities available to pupils, including drama, dance, music, arts week, many visitors and a big variety of clubs. All this results in pupils' excellent enjoyment of school, which is reflected in their above average attendance rates and their good behaviour. The very good attention paid to personal, social and health education ensures that pupils are exceptionally well informed about how to stay healthy and safe. They are very enthusiastic about sport, and excel in many local competitions, including winning the District and County girls' football championship.

When children join the school in the Nursery, their skills are similar to those expected for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 4, pupils have reached above average standards and their achievement is good. This is because of good teaching and learning. Parents have been understandably concerned about recent staff absence but this has been carefully managed. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' skills in writing has paid dividends, resulting in improved standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The school has quickly recognised the recent dip in standards in mathematics at the end of Year 4 and is taking action designed to remedy the situation. However, there are times in Years 3 and 4 when the work set in mathematics is not matched sufficiently well to pupils' individual abilities. The school's strong commitment to equality is demonstrated by the way all groups of pupils make good progress.

Although pastoral care is of a very high quality, and pupils are looked after very well indeed, academic guidance is only satisfactory. Pupils receive good guidance from teachers and support staff during lessons. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and the use of academic targets. As a result, pupils are not always fully aware of how they can improve their work. Nevertheless, they are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education. Not only are their literacy and numeracy skills above average, they are able to work very well with others and have particularly sensible attitudes. They are extremely confident about moving on to their new schools.

The good leadership and management provided by the headteacher, other senior leaders and governors have ensured that many areas of the school's work have significantly improved since the previous inspection. This has included enhancing an already excellent curriculum, which has helped pupils' personal development become outstanding, and successfully promoting higher standards in writing. The school's good contribution to community cohesion is demonstrated by the resources it has invested in developing its community facility, 'Treetops'. There are strong links with the local community, and good opportunities for pupils to meet children from other backgrounds and also to learn about world communities.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start in the Nursery, their skills are usually typical of those expected for their age. They make good progress through both the Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are above average, except in calculation, where they are average. A strong emphasis on routine and structure in the Nursery establishes clear expectations of

behaviour which are then built upon effectively in the Reception classes. Children respond well, they learn to play well together and to become independent. Adults are knowledgeable about how young children learn. They provide children with interesting activities that hold their attention well. However, boys tend to choose activities such as construction and playing on computers. Their reluctance to get involved in a broader range of activities is reflected in their rates of progress, which tend to be slightly slower than the girls'.

Staff carefully observe children's learning and are very sensitive to their needs. They are good at supporting activities chosen by children, using questioning well to move their learning on. Parents say there is a 'fantastic team', typically stating that staff are 'very approachable' and that children 'thrive under their care'. Good leadership and management have led to rapid improvements in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensured that welfare requirements are well met. A good example of the improvements that have been made is the development of a very thorough and sensitive induction programme designed to ensure that young children settle quickly into school and are able to make the best of the good provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the work set in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 is always carefully matched to pupils' needs.
- Enhance teachers' marking and the use of academic targets so that pupils know exactly how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2. In 2009, standards in reading and writing rose to well above average, reflecting the school's strong emphasis on developing these skills, and standards in mathematics were above average. A good proportion of pupils reached Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4, and standards are above average in Year 4. In this age group, pupils' progress in writing has accelerated and standards have risen, again reflecting the way the school has focused successfully on improving writing. Many pupils are now producing high quality pieces of writing containing interesting words and lively phrases, reflecting the way that the interesting topics have fired their imaginations. However, the school has recognised that progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 in 2009 was slower than in previous years, and is already starting to tackle this. Although those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and others who find academic work challenging, usually make good progress, their progress occasionally slows when they have limited access to adult support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils receive strong guidance in assemblies about the difference between right and wrong. The outstanding curriculum also makes a huge contribution towards the development of well-rounded pupils who have a very high level of maturity. The school is very successful at helping pupils to understand their feelings. Pupils' behaviour is good, especially in the classroom, where they respond enthusiastically to good teaching. They are very eager to please their teachers and work well both in groups and independently. Pupils say that everyone gets on well together and are emphatic that there is no bullying. They are confident that their teachers quickly sort

out any minor squabbles. Sport is seen as a major strength in the school with the vast majority of pupils participating in clubs or team events on a regular basis. Pupils also know they need to eat sensibly in order to keep healthy. All of this demonstrates their excellent commitment to living healthy lifestyles. Pupils make a full contribution to the school community and the wider community. For example, boys on the Eco Committee raised funds to buy a new truck so that they could regularly collect and recycle the paper generated in the school. The gardening club has just helped the school win a well deserved Gold Award for Best School Grounds Project by a Primary School.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The majority of lessons are very well planned and effectively delivered, and as a result pupils make good progress. Explanations at the beginning of lessons are very clear; consequently, pupils are able to work well independently. Relationships are very good indeed and behaviour is managed very effectively. The match of work to pupils' needs is good in most classes but, in a minority of mathematics lessons in Years 3 and 4, this is not the case. Occasionally, pupils of different abilities within the same set are given the same work, resulting in higher ability pupils not being sufficiently well challenged. Modern technology is used well to support learning, and pupils have good opportunities to develop their oral skills and to learn to work in partnership with others. Most teachers employ a good variety of methods in lessons that keep pupils actively engaged in learning. Now and again, teachers talk for too long and this can slow learning because some pupils become inattentive and find it hard to listen. Well briefed teaching assistants make an important contribution to learning during the introduction of lessons and through successfully supporting small groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum makes an important contribution to pupils' excellent personal development and good academic achievement. The curriculum for English has been carefully considered and strengthened by adding texts designed to motivate boys. Interesting opportunities for writing are provided using subject matter that has great appeal to both boys and girls. The links between subjects have been further developed since the previous inspection. The school is aware that the curriculum for mathematics needs to be further enhanced in Years 3 and 4 by promoting a better match of work to pupils' needs. The school has already started on developing pupils' problem solving skills, and pupils are enjoying the greater sense of challenge. There are also many opportunities for creative development, for example the arts week included activities based around the cultures of different continents and resulted in some stunning displays of children's work. Pupils also have very good opportunities for developing their musicality, for example all Year 3 pupils have the opportunity to start to learn the violin. Pupils are able to demonstrate their competence through musical soirees and other performances. There are extensive opportunities for enrichment, including a good range of clubs and many visitors to school. Pupils are especially enthusiastic about their residential experience in Year 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

High quality pastoral care contributes extensively to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their outstanding personal development. The school is a very caring community where relationships between adults and pupils are very good indeed. Consequently, pupils feel respected and secure. Safeguarding requirements are met. The school has good procedures to deal with any perceived incidents of bullying. Any incident is carefully recorded and the school also checks to make sure that issues have been fully resolved. Vulnerable pupils, including those with additional learning needs or emotional and behavioural issues, are sensitively supported. This effective support is enhanced by good links with external agencies. Pupils consistently receive good guidance in lessons from both teachers and support staff. There is some good marking, but more commonly it is congratulatory and does not provide pupils with sufficient information about how to produce better work. Targets are not always referred to in lessons or in teachers' marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have raised standards, accelerated pupils' achievement and secured pupils' outstanding personal development. Senior leaders, including subject coordinators, have worked hard to ensure that less experienced colleagues are well supported. Staff absence has affected continuity of leadership in mathematics, but the coordination of mathematics is now rapidly developing. Work has already started on making improvements to the way mathematics is taught in Years 3 and 4. The headteacher and other senior members of staff make very accurate and effective observations of teaching. This has helped the school know itself well and pinpoint where improvements need to be made. The checking of pupils' progress is much improved. Though not in place, there is the potential to use this information and that gleaned from lesson observations to greater effect by combining it with more formal checks of pupils' work. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and provide effective challenge as well as good support.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

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? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

Leadership and management

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| 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**

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Picknalls First School, Uttoxeter ST14 7QL

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. The inspection team really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You go to a good school that has some outstanding features. It is clear that you have a terrific time at school because of all the fun things you have to do. We enjoyed listening to you talk about the good work done by the school council and the Eco Committee. We thought you were very well informed about how to keep healthy and safe and were very impressed by your success in sports tournaments. What a lot of trophies there are in the headteacher's office! Your behaviour is good. You have good manners and make visitors very welcome indeed. We think that you all make a really important contribution to your school. We really enjoyed listening to Year 3 children play the violin, and watching the rehearsals for *The Wizard of Oz*. Going around your school was like going on a trip around the world with a visit to each continent in the different classrooms, and the artwork we saw was wonderful.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and older children also told us that they find learning fun. You are all making good progress and by the end of Year 4 you are reaching standards that are above those reached by other children of the same age in schools nationally. However, we thought the older children could do even better in their mathematics lessons. We have therefore asked your teachers to make sure that the work they set for these children is not too hard or too easy. Your teachers work very hard and teaching is good. Teachers give you lots of help during your lessons but we have asked them to improve the way they mark your books and use targets so that you know exactly how to improve your work. You told us that the staff look after you very well and we agree. The people who run your school are working hard to make it a better place.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Susan Walsh

Lead inspector