

Pirehill First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124164
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328068
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	182
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	Susan Crookshank
Headteacher	Debbie Breeze
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Tilling Drive Walton Stone ST15 0AA
Telephone number	01785 354041
Fax number	01785 354041

Age group	5–9
Inspection date	9 July 2009
Inspection number	328068

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and of the Early Years Foundation Stage and investigated the following issues.

- The school's assessment systems, pupils' knowledge of their targets and their understanding of how to improve their work.
- How well basic skills and opportunities to learn about different cultures are built into the curriculum.
- How well the new outdoor provision for Reception children is being used.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation and its assessment records; the sampling of lessons, of children's work and teachers' planning; discussions with the headteacher, key staff and children; and analysis of the parents' questionnaires. 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 in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized first school has three mixed-age and three single-age classes. Its Early Years Foundation Stage consists of 32 Reception-aged children. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds but none are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. A significant minority of pupils join the school in different year groups. A privately run nursery shares the school site and also provides before- and after-school care.

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. Its pupils are at the very heart of everything it does. They are cared for, guided and supported exceptionally well in a nurturing environment that enables them to thrive. It is difficult at times to remember that the oldest pupils are only in Year 4 because of the excellent personal skills they have that make them mature beyond their years. They are well prepared for their future. Parental comments are mostly very positive, highlighting, for example, the 'warm, friendly atmosphere', and describing the school as a place 'full of love, happiness and kindness', where their children make good progress.

Since the previous inspection, good improvements in the way pupils' progress is recorded mean that all staff now have a very clear view of how well each pupil in their class is doing. This information is used effectively in planning and to set targets for the pupils. The headteacher keeps a very close eye on all of this. She meets termly with teachers to check that they are doing everything they can to help each pupil make the best possible progress towards their targets. The school evaluates its performance rigorously and uses the information really well to set challenging whole-school targets that focus staff, pupils and parents on continuous improvement. All leaders, managers and governors are very effectively involved in this, and pupils are very keen indeed to succeed. They know their targets and how to measure their progress, and can explain clearly what they need to do to improve. Parents are eager to support their children's learning, and the school provides them with good information to help them do so.

Achievement is good. Standards are significantly above average in Year 2. This has been the case for several years, despite variations in the number of pupils with, and the range of, learning difficulties and/or disabilities in different year groups. Well-briefed and well-deployed support staff make a considerable contribution to pupils' overall achievement. The school also successfully enables the significant minority of pupils who join it in different year groups to make the same good progress as pupils who have attended all of their school lives. Standards are now significantly better than expected for pupils in Year 4, with a good proportion already working at the levels expected of Year 6. This represents continued good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from Year 2. Standards in Year 4 have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is above average. When they start to talk about what they particularly like, the list adds up until they are selecting almost everything. They are very proud of their school and what they do there, and cannot think of ways to improve it. They know they have a voice in the school, for example as school councillors, eco warriors and buddies to younger pupils, and that their views are very much valued. Parents, too, recognise this saying that the pupils are 'at the forefront of any decision-making'.

The curriculum is well planned, exciting and gives pupils many opportunities to learn about different subjects at the same time. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is a common thread in all of the school's work. Progression in these subjects, and in science, is carefully mapped, tracked and recorded. The school also records pupils' attainment in other subjects and the information is passed to subject leaders and class teachers where appropriate. It recognises, however, that there is scope to improve this further as the curriculum moves into the next stage of developing even closer links between subjects. An excellent range of activities in and outside the normal school day enriches pupils' learning and

personal development, bringing their learning into the real world. One such example is the fair trade day taking place on the day of the inspection. This included good quality work across subjects such as English, mathematics, art, geography, history and ICT that very successfully developed pupils' understanding of the impact of fair trading on the lives of people in third world countries.

Examples of work on display throughout the school, relating particularly to local history studies, develop in the pupils a good understanding of the community in which they live. Pupils participate well in as many community events as possible. This, and the many opportunities they have to take responsibility within the school, gives them a sense of belonging and of their place in the world. The Community Learning Partnership, of which the school is a part, brings parents and the community into the school regularly, further extending pupils' personal development. The missing link is that, although pupils study different world religions, their understanding of the range and diversity of culture in the United Kingdom is underdeveloped. Pupils acknowledge this and say they want to learn more about it too. The school has a good action plan for promoting community cohesion that recognises and plans to tackle the issue in the near future.

Behaviour is excellent throughout the school. Pupils feel safe. They have a very well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They are adamant that bullying hardly ever occurs and that any untoward behaviour is dealt with effectively. Safeguarding requirements, including those for child protection, meet current national guidelines, and all training is fully up to date. Pupils are taught well. Teachers plan activities together, mindful of pupils' different ages and stages of learning, minimising any impact mixed-age classes might have. Pupils' work is regularly marked, often with encouraging comments. In the best examples, teachers provide pupils with points for development related to their targets. However, this is not consistent throughout the school, and does not extend to subjects outside of literacy and numeracy. Nevertheless, the good improvement in the key issues identified at the previous inspection, and the obvious teamwork among the staff, give the school strong capacity for further improvement and the potential to become outstanding overall.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that children, who start Reception with the skills expected for their age, learn and develop well. Their health, welfare and well-being are of paramount importance. All staff make notes about what children do and achieve during each session, and the information is brought together at the end of the session to determine what should happen next. This ensures that learning is continuous for all children and assessment information leads to skilful planning that meets their needs and interests well. As a result, children make good progress and reach above average standards by the end of their Reception Year.

The Reception classroom and the well used outdoor area are hives of activity in which children learn to share, take turns and work together in different groups or on their own. There is a good balance between the activities that they choose for themselves and those directed by an adult. Because activities are explained well, children have a good understanding of what they are required to do, and they concentrate well on the task in hand. For example, the 'firemen' showed excellent understanding of fire safety as they dealt with an emergency, while other children followed instructions well to bake cakes, or shop for Fairtrade goods. However, when

children are working independently, adults do not always engage with them as much as they could do, to move their learning on.

What the school should do to improve further

- Achieve consistency in teachers' written marking to ensure it gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve at all times and in all subjects.
- Increase pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	1
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?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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?	1
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	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	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?	1

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	1
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 Pirehill First School, Walton ST15 0AA

Many thanks for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was delightful to talk to you and learn about what you do, and it is really good to know you enjoy school so much. You and your parents are right in thinking you go to a good school that takes exceptionally good care of you and prepares you well for the future. You certainly know how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy, and you are so grown up by Year 4, it is difficult to remember you are not already in Year 6!

Your teachers plan lots of exciting things for you to do in different subjects, often at the same time, and this helps you to see how what you learn in one subject can be used in another. As a result, you all make good progress. You reach standards that are much higher than expected for your age by the time you move on to your next school. Your excellent behaviour, and the care and respect you show for each other and for adults, adds to the happy atmosphere felt around the school. All of this happens because those responsible for leading and managing the school do a really good job.

We know your school is trying very hard to become an outstanding school and we have asked it to do two things to help it get there. They are:

- to get all of your teachers to mark your work equally well at all times and in all subjects so that you can see how to improve in each one
- to increase your understanding of the different cultures in the United Kingdom today, particularly as you told us you would like to know more about them too.

You can help your school by following the advice and guidance your teachers give you, and by continuing to work hard. We hope that by doing so, you will continue to enjoy learning for the rest of your lives, as much as you do now.

Yours faithfully Doris Bell

Lead inspector