

Curdworth Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125583
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328362
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Callow

This 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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Kelsey
Headteacher	Mr Colin Ricketts
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He visited five lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, members of the school council and parents. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, individual education plans of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, assessment information, minutes of governors' meetings and documents relating to pupils' safety and welfare. In addition, 44 parent questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- the effectiveness of teachers and leaders in improving standards and achievement in mathematics, particularly for more able pupils
- the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being
- the development of the systems for tracking pupils' progress.

Information about the school

The vast majority of pupils attending this small village school are of White British heritage. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average overall, but above average in some year groups. There are four classes of mixed-age pupils and there is the facility for those who are more able in mathematics or English to work in other classes according to their ability, rather than their age. Children of the Early Years Foundation Stage age start school in the Reception year and are taught in the same class as Year 1 pupils. The school holds a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, National Clean Air Gold and Sports Activemark. It works very closely with other local schools, for example to extend the range of curriculum opportunities.

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

Curdworth is a good school. It has continued to improve since its last inspection. Pupils thrive in a family atmosphere that provides outstanding care, guidance and support. They very much enjoy going to a small school where, as one pupil said, 'We are all friends, and we know everyone.' This comment reflects the ethos within the school where happy and motivated pupils and adults work hard together to ensure the school's success. Some of the key factors in this include:

- pupils feel extremely safe and well looked-after
- the behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to each other and to their work are exemplary
- right from when children begin school, they become independent and take responsibility
- pupils of all abilities achieve well and usually reach standards that are above average at the end of Years 2 and 6
- teachers' good subject knowledge and careful planning, including the effective use of teaching assistants, enable pupils to make good progress in lessons
- not only are pupils proud of, and committed to, their own community, but are actively involved in making a positive difference to the local and wider community
- the headteacher's determination, with the support of staff and governors, to sustaining school improvement.

School self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders have focused successfully, for example, on improvements in writing through greater opportunities for pupils to write at length and more focused targets. Attention is now rightly being given to raising standards and achievement in mathematics and there is a clear action plan for doing this. While pupils generally make good progress, there are missed opportunities in lessons to move them on quickly to their next stage of learning, particularly those pupils who are more able. Apart from in the Reception/Year 1 class, there are also missed opportunities in mathematics lessons and other subjects for pupils to clarify their thinking and understanding by talking to, and questioning, one another.

The confidence and high self-esteem of pupils are two qualities that stand out as exceptional at Curdworth School. These are developed well in even the youngest children so that by the time pupils leave in Year 6, as parents acknowledge, they are

very well prepared for the next stage in their education and for life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards to the same level in mathematics as in reading and writing by ensuring that opportunities are not missed in lessons to move pupils quickly on to the next stage of their learning, particularly those that are more able.
- Enable pupils to develop their thinking and understanding as much as possible in lessons by providing more opportunities for them to talk to, and question, each other.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Significant factors in all pupils achieving well are the positive relationships and the excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning they demonstrate in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other pupils because of the good support and guidance they get from teaching assistants. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Years 3 and 4, skilful questioning and the use of solid 3D shapes helped pupils to understand new concepts.

Children enter the Reception Year with skills similar to those found nationally for four year olds and leave in Year 6 with standards that are normally above average for eleven year olds. This reflects the good achievement of pupils as they make their way up through the school. While standards are generally above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, these vary a little from year to year, as is expected with small numbers of pupils in each year group. However, in 2008, standards overall in Year 6 were a little below average because of the high proportion of pupils in the year group with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, in both Year 2 and Year 6, standards were lower in mathematics than in reading and writing, particularly because not all more able pupils did quite as well as expected. Apart from this slight variance for a group in a particular subject, which the school has begun to respond to, there are no other apparent differences between the performance of different groups in the school.

Other key features which contribute to the overall outstanding judgement include:

- the great enjoyment pupils have of all aspects of school life, which was confirmed in discussion with pupils and parents
- the degree to which pupils feel happy, safe and secure as a result of the trust they have in the adults with whom they work
- the level of care and responsibility pupils show for one another, for example, older pupils acting as 'family group leaders'
- the extent to which pupils cooperate with one another and solve problems together, for example through the work of the school council.

Of particular significance is pupils' excellent contribution to the community. On a local basis, this has recently included taking cards and gifts to a former pupil on his 90th birthday. On an international level, this is demonstrated by the ongoing work to

support a school in Malawi where the fundraising organised by pupils themselves has provided a latrine block. The links with Malawi are also adding to pupils' outstanding cultural development.

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?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
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?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' positive attitudes to each other, the adults with whom they work and to their learning characterise every lesson. Good teaching takes place in calm but industrious classes so that pupils make good progress in their learning. Strengths of the teaching include:

- the depth of teachers' subject knowledge and their reinforcement of subject-specific vocabulary, for example when pupils in Years 1 and 2 were learning about pie-charts and pictograms as a means of recording data in mathematics
- well planned lessons to match the differing needs and abilities of pupils
- good classroom organisation and the use of resources
- regularly marked work, frequently highlighting the extent to which pupils meet the objectives of the lesson
- the effective use of teaching assistants, particularly but not exclusively to support those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Adults pose good questions, but when the class is being taught as a whole, teachers infrequently give time for pupils to discuss the answers amongst themselves before responding, or to comment on an individual's response. This limits the opportunities for pupils to clarify their thinking and understanding, particularly in mathematics but also in other subjects. The school already has plans to improve this through the 'Looking for Learning' pilot programme that it will be involved with through the local

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

authority next year. Good use of assessment means that work is usually pitched at the right level of challenge for individuals and for groups. In mathematics, however, ongoing assessment in lessons sometimes does not pick up on those pupils who are finding the work easy and are ready to move on to the next stage in their learning. This is particularly the case for more able pupils, which limits their progress.

Visits and visitors provide breadth and interest for pupils to the good curriculum. During the inspection, for example, gymnastics was taught by sports coaches during physical education (PE) lessons and Years 5 and 6 went on a visit to Combe Abbey to learn more about sustainability. Themed weeks, such as 'Diversity Week' and 'Health and Safety Week', also help to engage pupils and support their outstanding personal development. Good links with other local schools enrich the curriculum, such as through the 'Artist in Residence Project'. The recent return of the Year 5/6 teacher from a visit to Ephangweni School in Malawi provided an excellent example of making links between subjects, with pupils learning about the conventions of letter writing, world poverty and personal hygiene in underdeveloped countries within the same lesson. The school has recently purchased a class set of laptop computers as part of its drive to increase the benefits of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for both teaching and learning across the curriculum.

The level of care, guidance and support is outstanding. It is at the heart of the school community and acknowledged by pupils and parents as to what makes Curdworth School so special. As a consequence, all pupils, including the most vulnerable, are happy, feel safe and are enabled to make good academic progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher's strong commitment, with the support of other leaders, including governors, to continue to bring about improvement has ensured that the school has moved on since its last inspection, despite some unsettlement because of staff changes. Systems to track pupils' progress are much more rigorous so that pupils at risk of underachievement can more easily be identified and appropriate intervention strategies and support programmes put in place. The school acknowledges there is room for further development, particularly to ensure that the progress expected each year is based on challenging targets set for the end of Year 6. The school has demonstrated through the improvements made to pupils' writing that it can accurately identify weaknesses in the school's performance and successfully remedy them. Governors recognise that they could do more to monitor how well the school is doing against school improvement priorities through more regular, focused visits.

Parents say that the relationships that they have with the headteacher and staff of the school mean that if they do have any problems, which is rare, they are quickly sorted out. This supports their children’s enjoyment of school and their good progress. One parent wrote, ‘I feel parents’ opinions are taken seriously and always count at this school.’ Other partnerships are also effective so that, for example, pupils have good opportunities to learn how to take responsibility for their own safety and well-being by working with the police and health services. The school takes its statutory duties to safeguard pupils very seriously and at the time of the inspection, these were found to be thorough and effective. Community cohesion is good and going from strength to strength, particularly as pupils gain a greater understanding of the global community through its links with Ephangweni School.

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	2
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Reception make good progress in all areas of learning so that by the time they go into Year 1 standards overall are above average and broadly average in writing. Good induction procedures and a strong emphasis on children’s personal development ensure that they settle quickly and are happy at work and at play. They develop extremely well in confidence and independence, choosing activities sensibly and organising for themselves the resources that they need. One child was observed making a poster to warn the other children that the playground might be slippery, having a really good attempt at the writing and accurately using the understanding of letters and sounds that he had already been taught.

The curriculum takes good account of the children’s own interests so that the current topic of ‘mini-beasts’ has branched out to encompass birds because that is what the children wanted to learn about. As a consequence, they really enjoy playing in the bird-hide using the binoculars that they have made. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. In both, however, there are missed opportunities to move children’s learning on quickly in mathematics, particularly for those who are more able. The Early Years Foundation

Stage is well led, with an appropriate current focus on ensuring continuity of teaching and learning by the job-share partners.

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

Parents are extremely positive about the school, as shown in their responses to the questionnaire and in discussion, and only one minor point of criticism was raised at all. They are pleased that their children are so happy at school and acknowledge that this is due to the fact that their children are well known by the staff who are 'approachable and caring'. The school's success in ensuring pupils' excellent personal and social development and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was specifically mentioned in several written comments. Parents are well aware of the many strengths of the school, so for example one parent wrote, 'It is fantastic how links are forged with the local community.' Another summarised her views of the school by commenting, 'The whole feeling I get is one of caring. I recommend the school whenever I have the opportunity and I am thankful that I sent my son to this school.'

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 in order 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.



12 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Curdworth Primary School, Curdworth, B76 9HF

Thank you for being so polite when I visited your school recently. The way you treated a visitor was just one of the things that showed me what a good school you go to. Your behaviour and attitudes to your work are excellent. All the children I spoke to told me how much they enjoy going to school, particularly because everyone is so friendly and the adults know you and make sure that you are extremely well looked after.

Here are some of the other good things that I found.

- You make good progress in your lessons because your teachers plan your work carefully.
- Right from when you start in Reception you are helped to develop in confidence and to become independent.
- You show a lot of responsibility, not only in school by taking care of one another, but also by doing things to help people in the village and raising money for Ephangweni School.
- Your headteacher is very determined for your school to keep getting better and the staff and governors work hard to help him.

There are two things which I have asked the school to improve.

- Make sure in mathematics lessons that you move on quickly to work that is harder, when you can already do something easily.
- Give you more opportunities in lessons to talk to, and question, each other about what you are learning.

I know that because you work like a big family at your school you will do your best to help with these things. I wish you every success in the future and particularly when you take part in the finals of the International Primary Design and Technology Competition. I hope your Malawi Swirl Bread wins!

Yours faithfully

Peter Callow
Lead inspector

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