

Pope Paul Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 117496 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 339018 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 October 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | George Logan |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 210 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rosemary Cope |
| Headteacher | Helen Lines |
| Date of previous school inspection | 0 April 2007 |
| School address | Baker Street Potters Bar Hertfordshire |
| Telephone number | 01707 659755 |
| Fax number | 01707 665431 |
| Email address | head@popepaul.herts.sch.uk |

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, school leaders and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including the main improvement plan. Inspection questionnaires were received from staff, pupils and from 99 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How effectively the school has integrated outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum
- The extent to which the school supports the progress of girls and of higher-attaining pupils across the school and the impact of recent initiatives upon standards in writing
- How successfully the school has developed the leadership role of middle managers and their impact on pupils' learning
- The effectiveness of the school's response to the parental dissatisfaction identified in the previous inspection report.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school, with seven classes. It serves a residential area on the outskirts of Potters Bar and the great majority of pupils are White British. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. All pupils speak English as their first language. A below average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Almost all children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. Almost all of them have had some pre-school experience elsewhere. There have been a significant number of staff changes in recent years.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a good school with a distinctive ethos. It is a harmonious community which provides a welcoming and secure environment for its pupils. Adults offer good pastoral care and support and this is reflected in pupils' good behaviour, excellent attendance and consistently good attitudes to learning. The school supports pupils' personal development well. As a result, pupils say that they very much enjoy school and feel safe there. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles.

Achievement is good. Although many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with above average standards, they blossom in Reception and make good progress as a result of consistently good teaching. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is sustained well as they move through the school. Standards are above average and have risen steadily at Year 6 in recent years, reflecting increasingly rapid progress by pupils. In 2009, progress was particularly good in English and science, but not quite so strong in mathematics. Currently, the school does not systematically identify, or make specific provision for, pupils who are gifted or talented. Otherwise, the school provides a good range of activities which engage pupils' enthusiasm well, although outdoor learning is not yet fully embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Effective partnerships with other schools have significantly enhanced opportunities in French, music and physical education.

Teachers use good day-to-day assessment systems well to plan lessons and to guide them in providing additional support. Teachers carefully check pupils' understanding. However, while work is marked regularly, not all teachers provide clear guidance as to what pupils must do to improve. In the absence of a key member of staff, the analysis of pupil performance data is not sufficiently rigorous.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head teacher has a clear vision for the school and has done much to restore the confidence of parents. Her monitoring of teaching is incisive. Self-evaluation is accurate and generally effective in sustaining continued improvement. Governors are involved in this process and have an increasingly secure understanding of pupils' progress. Even so, governance is no better than satisfactory, as governors do not yet hold the school sufficiently to account. While there are some strengths in the leadership, not all middle managers have enough impact upon pupils' learning in their subjects. In addition, staff turnover and the absence of senior leadership team members have adversely affected the pace of change. This lack of stability within the senior leadership suggests that the school's capacity for improvement is, at present, no better than satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have free access to a planned, well-resourced programme of outdoor learning opportunities as part of their daily provision.
- Improve provision for pupils identified as gifted or talented by:
 - compiling a detailed register which identifies pupils with particular strengths and aptitudes
 - ensuring that their individual needs are met more fully through opportunities for challenging extension activities.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - undertaking more rigorous analysis of available data to identify variations in pupils' progress
 - ensuring that middle managers have a more consistent impact upon pupils' learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school. They are enthusiastic, settle quickly in lessons, work well independently and in groups and form positive relationships with those around them. Although there are some variations from year to year, pupils build well on their previous learning as they move through the school. This is a stronger picture than at the last inspection. Staff are attentive to individual needs, deploying additional support effectively. As a result, learning is good for all groups of pupils. This was evident, for example, in the commitment of Year 2 pupils as they explored skin tones and textures in an art lesson and of Year 5 pupils while working in pairs to research information on Cameroon.

Standards in Year 6 have risen steadily since 2005 and have, overall, been consistently above average. Standards in mathematics and science were both high in 2008. In 2009, standards in English, which had lagged behind, improved significantly and were high. This represented good progress since Year 2. Typically, boys achieve particularly well. The school recognises that progress could be further increased in mathematics through providing greater challenge for more able pupils. Although standards at Year 2 have dipped marginally, reflecting variations in the ability of different year groups, they are always above average.

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They feel safe and have great confidence in the adults around them. As one said, 'It's like a second home.' They feel that behaviour is mostly good and that bullying is rare. Their well-developed social skills, good leadership opportunities, such as those developed in the Play Leaders scheme, together with good academic skills, ensure that pupils are well prepared for their future education. Pupils contribute well to the school through the school council, which provides an effective forum for their views. Although they have

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good opportunities, as in 'One World Week', to engage with cultures and communities internationally, there are fewer chances to experience more ethnically diverse areas of the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 2 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

While there is some variability, partly because of the relative inexperience of some staff, teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils through rigorous questioning that stimulates their thinking. A good example was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils' knowledge of divisibility was tested and extended. Teachers build successfully upon pupils' positive attitudes. Planning generally ensures that tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities. The checking of pupils' learning in lessons is good. Assessments are used effectively to evaluate progress. Some use is made of individual learning targets, although these are organised informally across the school. Pupils are given good opportunities to evaluate the quality of their own work. Teaching assistants work effectively with class teachers to support pupils who need additional help.

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

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The curriculum currently promotes high standards in reading and in writing, with some cross-curricular use of writing skills. There is good provision for developing information and communication technology skills, although they could be used more effectively across the curriculum. Partnerships have successfully supported curriculum development in, for example, French, music and physical education, through joint initiatives and some specialist teaching. At present, the school does not have a gifted or talented pupil register, and, while there is some provision, for example, in art and through the good provision for sport and music, this does not represent a coherent programme. There is good provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education, underpinning pupils' good personal development. The range of enrichment activities, visits and visitors is extensive, although there are relatively few extra-curricular clubs.

Staff care for pupils well and there are close links with parents. Pupils speak highly of their school and feel that they receive very good support as transfer to secondary schools approaches. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils who have identified learning or welfare needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: 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 | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and governors are very successful in supporting pupils' pastoral development and in building links with the parish. Although slow to tackle some issues, the school has improved its effectiveness since the last inspection. The head teacher has a clear vision for what needs to be done and most parents value the strong ethos which she has established. Her evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate. Instability in staffing has, however, constrained the pace of progress. Where subject leadership is well established, as in science, there is a positive impact on pupils' learning. This is not a consistent feature in other subjects. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate objectives, although success criteria and timescales for action are not tightly enough defined to ensure the pace of improvement is accelerated.

The governing body encompasses a range of relevant expertise. Governors regularly visit classrooms and have a good knowledge of pupils' learning. They ensure that statutory requirements are met, including the school's satisfactory procedures for safeguarding pupils. While they understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and are concerned to shape its future direction, they do not yet hold school leaders sufficiently to account.

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The school engages well with community interests and with parental expectations and tackles potential discrimination resolutely. Equality of opportunity is, however, only satisfactory since gifted or talented pupils are not supported as effectively as those with special educational needs. The school understands community cohesion issues well and has identified opportunities for pupils to extend their awareness of a broad range of cultures, though more at local and international levels than at a national level.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| 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 typically enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are above the levels expected for their age, though more so in their personal development than in other elements. They settle quickly as a result of the thorough induction arrangements and the high ratio of adult support. Children are well cared for and have good relationships with staff. They feel safe and secure, are sociable, independent, and enthusiastic about learning, and behave very well. Effective teaching helps children, including those with additional learning needs, to make good progress. Outcomes are particularly good in children's personal development, their mathematical development and in their physical development. Children make outstanding progress in the development of their reading, writing and language skills as a result of the highly effective teaching of the linking of sounds and letters. By the end of Reception, standards are consistently above those expected nationally. Leadership and management are good. The monitoring and recording of progress are rigorous, and information collected is used systematically to inform planning. Although, in most respects, children access a rich and stimulating curriculum, the school has not yet fully realised the potential of the outdoor learning

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area. As a result, there are missed opportunities to extend children's learning still further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| 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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers speak highly of the school. There were many, mostly positive, written comments. One, typical of many others, said, 'The teaching staff are doing an excellent job. They involve parents and have made my child excited and enthusiastic about education!' Five parents and carers felt that there are still problems around communication with parents. However, the inspection team found that communication is a good feature. The weekly newsletter is informative and is readily accessible to parents, both in hard copy and on the school's website. The school's efforts to engage parents compare favourably with other schools. While there were a few concerns around pupils' behaviour, instances of poor behaviour appear to be isolated and generally well managed. Most parents felt that their children make good progress, although a few do not. This report recommends that the school enhances its provision for gifted or talented pupils. Overall, the consensus suggests that this is a happy, caring school where pupils build good basic skills and are well supported in their personal development. Inspection findings mostly endorse parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pope Paul Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 63 | 64 | 31 | 31 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 65 | 66 | 31 | 31 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 39 | 39 | 44 | 44 | 12 | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 40 | 40 | 44 | 44 | 15 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 48 | 48 | 42 | 42 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 42 | 42 | 43 | 43 | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 51 | 52 | 43 | 43 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 34 | 34 | 47 | 47 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 40 | 40 | 47 | 47 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 41 | 41 | 39 | 39 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 36 | 36 | 47 | 47 | 14 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 45 | 45 | 39 | 39 | 13 | 13 | 1 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 58 | 46 | 57 | 46 | 8 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| 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. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| 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. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| 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. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pope Paul Catholic Primary School, Potters Bar EN6 2ES

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and spending time in your lessons. We found that your school has improved since its last inspection and is now good.

Our main findings are these:

You behave really well and work hard. You attend as often as you possibly can.

The links with the local parish are really well developed.

Standards are above average across the school.

Most teaching is good and this is helping you to make good progress.

Children in Reception make really good progress, especially in their knowledge of sounds and letters and in their personal development.

The school makes sure that you are cared for well. You conduct yourselves safely and really know how important it is to eat healthily.

The curriculum is good. You get to go on a wide range of visits. Those of you who need extra support are well provided for.

We are asking the school to make the following changes so that you do even better:

Further develop the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage and plan activities to provide more opportunities for children to learn in different ways.

Provide carefully thought out activities for pupils who are really talented in particular areas, so they can develop their skills and extend their knowledge more rapidly.

Ensure that school leaders make better use of all the information they have so they always know exactly how much progress you are making.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan

Lead inspector

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