

Polehampton CE Infant School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 109981 |
| Local Authority | Wokingham |
| Inspection number | 356663 |
| Inspection dates | 25–26 January 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Rob Crompton |

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

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|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 172 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Debbie Richards |
| Headteacher | Helen Ball |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9–10 June 2008 |
| School address | Hermitage Drive Reading RG10 9HS |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Observations included 15 lessons taught by seven members of staff. Meetings were held with pupils, the governing body and staff. Inspectors looked at minutes of meetings held by the governing body, curriculum plans and assessment documents. The questionnaires returned by 115 parents and carers, and 20 staff were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress and attainment of current pupils to see whether the recent high levels of achievement are on course to be sustained.
- The outcomes and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, to explore the accuracy of the school's judgement that overall effectiveness is outstanding.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average school serves the villages of Twyford, Charvil and Ruscombe near Reading. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage, with a few from other, mostly Asian, backgrounds. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below that found nationally. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises an integrated Reception unit for 60 children. The school has achieved a number of awards, including Healthy Schools Status, the Activemark, certification by the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) and the ICT Mark. The headteacher has been appointed to become the executive headteacher of the federation between the school and the neighbouring junior school which is scheduled for September 2011.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where pupils make excellent progress in all aspects of their development and reach high levels of attainment. Their achievement is outstanding. Parents and carers are unanimous in their praise for the school. One summed this up in her comment, 'I have been consistently overwhelmingly happy with every aspect of the school. I often think I am happier with the school than I have any right to expect. Every member of staff is to be congratulated.'

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their education and this is borne out by their high levels of attendance and eager participation in lessons. Their very positive attitudes to learning stem from high-quality teaching and a curriculum which engages and challenges them. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils have a high level of independence. They take the initiative and have a pride in their learning.

Relationships across the school are outstanding. There is a strong feeling of community and excellent rapport at all levels. One parent, expressing the views of many, wrote, 'Our children are fortunate to attend Polehampton... there is a warm, caring ethos in which every child is valued for who they are and encouraged to be their very best.' Pupils said they felt safe and loved. They reflect sensitively on what is dear to them. They understand that the United Kingdom is culturally diverse. The school is rightly looking for further opportunities to provide pupils with first-hand experiences to deepen this understanding.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what works well and what needs to improve. Since the last inspection, the school has made headway on several fronts and there is no sense of complacency. This strong commitment, together with the calm, effective leadership of the headteacher and excellent support from the whole school community, mean that the school is extremely well placed to continue to improve in the future.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend opportunities for pupils to gain a deeper understanding of cultural diversity by:
 - ensuring that this is given a stronger emphasis in the school's promotion of community cohesion
 - providing further first-hand experiences for pupils to engage with children from different communities and diverse backgrounds within the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

| |
|----------|
| 1 |
|----------|

Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and their overall achievement is outstanding. Children enter the school with knowledge, understanding and skill levels that are above those typical of the age group. They make good progress through the school and attainment is high in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Pupils work and play in a cooperative and self-controlled manner. Their attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive. One pupil's remark, 'You learn something new every day', was echoed by many.

Pupils made at least good progress in all the lessons observed. Year 2 pupils, for example, made rapid gains in linking sounds and letters. Pupils read very well and this is reflected in the vocabulary that they use in their written work. During a lesson on adjectives, one pupil showed considerable skill and flair as she wrote, 'As I wandered into the thick, humid bush, I was so busy chasing rabbits that I lost sight of my friends... I heard a morose sound. I couldn't help but follow it...' Pupils made rapid progress as they learned how to use tally marks when collecting information and how to convert these into graphs. Their secure grasp of number facts was evident as they counted in groups of five and ten. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities sustain their engagement and strive to improve because tasks are set at the right level. As a result, they make at least good progress towards their individual targets.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and feel well cared for. They understand the importance of healthy living and how it affects fitness and weight. 'If you don't exercise, you might change size,' said one. Pupils' awareness of health issues and the importance of exercise is reflected in the school's Healthy School status and the Activemark award. Pupils take a pride in their roles as school councillors and eco-warriors. In discussing their fund raising for flood victims in Australia, Brazil and Sri-Lanka, one said, 'We all have jobs to do.' Pupils' love of school is reflected not only in their high levels of attendance but also in their eager faces as they enter each morning.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy a wide range of interesting activities and experiences through the curriculum and extra activities. There is a strong focus on ensuring that every pupil gains a solid foundation in literacy and numeracy. At the same time, pupils have many opportunities to practise, consolidate and extend these skills through imaginative topics which interest and engage them. They talked enthusiastically about their 'Fair Trade' topic, for example, which involved studying the origin of products and concluded with a 'Fair Trade' coffee morning which pupils organised for parents and carers. Pupils routinely use new technology such as the internet and digital cameras for research and presentation by using their well-developed computer skills. The first-rate use of information and communication technology to support learning is recognised by the school's 'ICT Mark' award. Art and music enrich pupils' experiences and play a strong part in their cultural development.

Outstanding teaching is the main reason why pupils progress so well. Teachers have wonderful relationships with pupils, which make for a really warm ethos in classrooms and a clear focus on learning. Activities in lessons are set at different levels so that pupils receive the right level of challenge. These are based on extremely accurate ongoing assessment which identifies pupils capable of moving on to higher-level work and those who need consolidation or further support. The skills staff have in providing for different groups, including the most able, are reflected by certification from the National Association for Able Children in Education. Pupils

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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regularly review their own progress and that of their classmates, often using criteria they have helped to devise at the beginning of a topic. Teachers frequently use ‘no hands up’ questioning which keeps pupils on their toes and enables the level of questions to be adapted to suit individuals. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and make a significant contribution to pupils’ progress in lessons and in catch-up groups.

All pupils are very well known as individuals and staff respond to their differing needs extremely effectively. Targeted support enables pupils with particular gifts or talents, those with communication difficulties and those with physical disabilities to build on their strengths and take a full part in school life. All staff have pupils’ welfare as their first priority. Several parents and carers paid tribute to the level of care their children receive. One was delighted in the welcome she had received recently, despite the fact her child needed vital medication during the school day. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school’s approach. They appreciate the way the school guides them in supporting their children’s learning at home.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 1 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 1 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with excellent support from the deputy headteacher, provides outstanding leadership and transmits her high expectations clearly but sensitively to all members of the school community. Staff form a very strong team and work hard to ensure that high standards are maintained and that the school continues to improve.

Procedures to ensure pupils are safe in school are exemplary and firmly embedded. The governing body plays an important role in this by visiting the school regularly to check on the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy, and carrying out health and safety audits to the premises. Staff promote equality of opportunity very well and there are no differences in the attainment of progress of different groups. Racist incidents are extremely rare, but procedures are in place to ensure that any that arise are tackled promptly.

Parents and carers much appreciate the guidance they receive in supporting their children at home and are active partners in their children’s learning. They raise considerable funds through the parent–teacher association which are used to support visits and other aspects of the curriculum. Excellent links exist with the neighbouring

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junior school. Staff work closely together to help ensure continuity of the curriculum and an extremely smooth transition from Year 2 to Year 3. Close links with other local schools lead to mutual benefits, with staff taking the principal role in curriculum design. The school receives strong support from the church and local companies.

The governing body has an excellent grasp of the school’s strengths and areas for further improvement. Members analyse assessment information sharply and gain first-hand insights through regular focused visits during the school day. The governing body and school leaders have completed a thorough audit of the school community. The school’s focus on values during assemblies is one of the many ways the school promotes a sense of common values and purpose. Charity events and links with schools overseas promote community cohesion and citizenship, and the feeling that pupils can make a difference in the lives of others. Staff have been enthused by recent further training and plans are in place to promote community cohesion even more strongly through strengthening links with the local and wider United Kingdom communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good and often outstanding progress in the Reception unit. They develop very good levels of independence, for example, in choosing their own activities during the daily ‘Explore Time’. They work well together and celebrate one another’s work. This was evident from the spontaneous applause for individuals as children looked at the photographs taken by adults during their previous activities. Children’s behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They are inquisitive and ask questions freely of their teachers and visitors. They remain focused for long periods and there is a hive of activity both indoors and outside. Children learn how to use

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classroom tools, such as scissors, safely and gain insights into road safety as they ride toy vehicles outside, obeying the traffic signs set out on the road track.

Through a wide range of activities which involve cooperation with their classmates, children gain confidence in speaking. The systematic teaching of sounds and letters, plus plenty of opportunities to develop their early writing skills, means that children make very good progress in reading and writing. Children’s very secure numeracy skills are evident as they ‘help’ adults count objects, name the shapes they use to create their own ‘Mr Men’, and predict whether the number of school lunches will be greater than packed lunches.

There is a vibrant and purposeful environment in all areas. Daily learning is planned meticulously, with all staff involved in ensuring both challenge and support for all. High-level questioning probes children’s understanding and deepens their thinking. Opportunities abound for children to be independent, creative and collaborative in their learning. For example, boys worked well with girls to ‘repair’ the roof of the playhouse. All children understood their roles in this and the need to wear safety hats.

All staff have a deep understanding of children’s academic and personal development. Expectations are high and there is a shared drive for continuous improvement. For example, recent modifications to the tracking of children’s progress enable staff to identify trends and to provide enrichment or support for individuals excelling or falling behind. The learning platform² is used very well for children to develop computer skills and for parents and carers to share experiences which are linked to the topics being studied. Open mornings and home–school ‘brilliant books’ enable home and school to celebrate children’s achievements. Induction arrangements are excellent. The sending of postcards with teachers’ photographs to welcome children has been well received by children and parents and carers alike.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |

² This provides internet access to a wide range of resources for use by pupils, teachers and parents.

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Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. All parents and carers were happy overall with their children's experience. They were unanimous in their positive views of almost all aspects of the school. Inspectors explored the individual concerns raised by a very few of the parents and carers. They found that the overall picture was reflected in the entirely positive views of the overwhelming majority.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Polehampton Infant 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 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 92 | 80 | 23 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 91 | 79 | 23 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 76 | 66 | 33 | 29 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 74 | 64 | 36 | 31 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 84 | 73 | 29 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 86 | 75 | 29 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 83 | 72 | 32 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 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) | 85 | 74 | 21 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 86 | 75 | 24 | 21 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 76 | 66 | 35 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 77 | 67 | 35 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 93 | 81 | 20 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 92 | 80 | 23 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 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 all 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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 59 | 35 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary schools | 9 | 44 | 39 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 13 | 36 | 41 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Special schools | 35 | 43 | 17 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 21 | 42 | 29 | 9 |
| All schools | 13 | 43 | 37 | 8 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



27 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Polehampton Infant School, Reading RG10 9HS

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently and telling us your opinions about your school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us to form a clear view about how well your school works. You go to an outstanding school and these are some of the important things we found out about it.

- All the adults take really good care of you and help you if you have any problems or if you need to catch up with your work.
- You progress very well and reach high levels in literacy and numeracy because the teaching is excellent.
- You always look out for each other and offer help if it is needed.
- Your behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school.
- You work very hard in lessons and always try to do your best.
- The children in Reception settle into school quickly and enjoy all the activities organised for them.
- The people in charge are doing a great job in helping the school become even better.

Although things are working really well, we have asked your teachers to find ways for you to get to know more about what it is like to live in areas of the country where there are people from lots of different backgrounds.

You can all play your part in helping your school to become even better by making sure you continue to work hard, behave well and attend school every day.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton
Lead inspector

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