

Pucklechurch CofE VC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number	109171
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	324917
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Kenneth (Ken) Bush

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	267
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	Christine Moore
Headteacher	David Forrester
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Castle Road Pucklechurch Bristol BS16 9RF
Telephone number	01179 372579
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pucklechurch is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average, although none is currently in receipt of statement of Special Educational Needs. The school provides Early Years Foundation Stage provision for pupils in Reception. It achieved Healthy School status in 2008 and Activemark in 2007.

A breakfast club and after-school club are located on the school site but are independent of the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pucklechurch Primary School provides its pupils with a satisfactory but improving standard of education. Shortly after the previous inspection, the school underwent rapid and significant changes in staffing and leadership, which for a period of time restricted the school's development. However, the forward-looking headteacher, assisted by a supportive and active governing body, is now leading a renewed focus on raising standards and improving rates of progress, alongside a strong commitment to equip pupils with the capacity to be successful learners throughout their educational careers.

The standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 6 are broadly average, but are now beginning to improve, having declined in 2007 and 2008. The rate of progress over time has been too variable and some pupils, and, in particular, boys, have not achieved as well as they should have done. The school has recently addressed this through radical improvements to the curriculum and a more effective response to underperformance. As this has not yet made a full impact, achievement overall is satisfactory but is improving gradually as progress accelerates.

Teaching and learning are also satisfactory but improving as a result of good monitoring by senior leaders and through well targeted professional development to encourage more active learning. Writing is the weakest area of provision within literacy, especially in Key Stage 1, and the school has begun to address this as a high priority for improvement, enlisting appropriate support from the local authority. Comprehensive assessment systems are in place to enable tracking of pupils' progress, but too many lessons do not take sufficient account of pupils' starting points and capabilities to ensure consistently good or better progress. This most notably, but not exclusively, affects more able pupils. The quality of guidance, including marking and feedback, is satisfactory. The well planned and innovative curriculum is a key strength of the school and matches most pupils' needs and capabilities well. It is broad, balanced and enables good progression across key stages, including into secondary education. It also provides a strong platform for sustained school improvement in the future.

The pastoral support of students, including those who are vulnerable and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good and helps to create a positive learning community, enriched by the close links with the church. Parents are generally supportive and endorse the measures that the headteacher and the governing body are taking to move the school forward. One parent commented: 'I am so impressed with the staff at Pucklechurch School. They create a calm, but fun, environment for the children. The headteacher is a creative and visionary leader; I am really impressed with the school.' Pupils, too, have a high regard for their school and enjoy their education, as reflected in the outstanding level of attendance. Many show levels of maturity beyond their years and there is a very strong sense of engagement with their school, their local community, and increasingly, global issues such as

the environment. They are developing a good range of personal skills that are preparing them appropriately for the next phase of education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children join Reception with the skills expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress with strengths in reading, writing, creative and physical development. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, they are working within the early learning goals, some at the highest levels. Children's personal development and well-being are good. They sustain concentration, form very good relationships with adults, share resources and ideas, and mostly behave well. Children are confident in developing their own activities such as seen during the inspection when decorating brushes, water and wheeled vehicles were creatively applied to set up a car wash!

Provision is satisfactory and staff often use children's ideas to plan activities, for example a travel agency role-play area. They are skilled at talking and listening to the children. The outdoor area has been developed successfully to support progress in all the six areas of learning. However, planned activities put out to encourage child-initiated learning are not always sharply focused enough on helping children to tackle the next steps in their development, and this slows progress. In this safe and secure environment, pastoral care for the children is generally strong.

Leadership is satisfactory. The leader has successfully developed strong links with home and pre-school groups. Careful observations of children's achievements are made which are used to plan appropriate taught activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attainment and accelerate rates of pupils' progress, especially for lower performing groups such as boys.
- Improve provision for, and standards of, writing, with particular reference to Key Stage 1.
- Make better use of assessment information to provide suitably challenging work for all pupils, notably the more able.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils join Pucklechurch with broadly average levels of attainment and, by the end of Year 6, standards have typically remained close to the national average. However, in the 2008 national tests at Key Stage 2, there was a slight overall improvement in attainment after a decline in standards in the previous two years. Inspection evidence indicates that the present Year 6 pupils will sustain this improving trend. Progress during Key Stage 2 is also now beginning to improve, especially in mathematics, as a result of more focused and effective interventions to identify pupils at risk of underperformance, and of more creative teaching. More able pupils, too, are now starting to achieve more consistently than in the past; however, the achievement of boys, notably in writing, continues to lag behind that of girls. Since rates of progress tend to be erratic, achievement overall is satisfactory.

As a consequence of well targeted and effective support, the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as the progress of pupils from other vulnerable groups, does not differ significantly from that of their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' positive attitudes to school and their good enjoyment of learning are reflected in excellent levels of attendance. Relationships between staff and pupils are cordial and purposeful, and between pupils and their peers are friendly and mutually supportive. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is good and improving, largely as a result of the school's focus on raising expectations and through staff following up incidents more consistently.

Pupils show good knowledge and understanding of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle and put this into practice through enthusiastic participation in the range of sporting activities which the school provides. The school's Healthy School status is a source of pride and motivation for pupils. The school's strong, positive ethos is expressed through its emphasis on respect for others. As a consequence, pupils report that bullying incidents are rare and when they do arise, are handled with promptness and sensitivity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and a major strength of the school. One parent wrote: 'There are strong links with the church and this adds a special dimension to children's learning experience.'

Pupils embrace extremely well the many opportunities which exist to exercise leadership and show responsibility both in the immediate school community and beyond. Personal skills such as problem-solving and effective teamwork are well developed. The contribution of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to the development of their future economic well-being is less secure, although pupils are appropriately prepared for the next phase of their education when they move on to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, enabling pupils to make sound progress. There are some key strengths in teaching such as good subject knowledge, clear explanation of tasks and interesting lesson content which captures the interest of pupils. Teaching assistants are used well during guided sessions, reflecting the school's commitment to professional development in this area. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and a clear understanding of how to move learning forward. The pace is brisk and teachers use questioning well to encourage pupils to think and develop their understanding of the topic being covered. However, good teaching is not sufficiently developed throughout the school and there are some common weaknesses. Planning of activities does not always meet the needs of all learners and higher ability children, in particular, are not always sufficiently challenged. In writing, there is insufficient focus in lessons on developing children's handwriting and on encouraging children to undertake sustained writing tasks. This was especially evident during the inspection in Key Stage 1.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The recently revised curriculum makes effective use of interesting and relevant learning themes in foundation subjects so that pupils enjoy their learning. Planning makes good use of cross-curricular links between subjects and in many cases provides learning in real life contexts, engaging and motivating well. Innovative initiatives, such as 'History Week', are popular with pupils and parents, who value the coherence this gives to learning and the chance to focus on topics in depth and breadth. The 'Successful Learners Project' ensures children throughout the school effectively evaluate and consider the characteristics of a successful learner. However, insufficient planned opportunities to write regularly for sustained periods mean that some pupils' literacy skills are not sufficiently developed.

Personal, social and health education is supported well by the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) project and circle time. There are many clubs, including a breakfast and after school club, visits and activities as well as music and sports provision which pupils thoroughly enjoy and that support their personal development well. Children have good opportunities to contribute to the wider community, taking part in local events such as the annual village Revel concert.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of pastoral care in the school is good and most parents rightly feel their children are well supported. One commented: 'Teachers are very caring and each child is made to feel special.' The calm and welcoming atmosphere ensures that all children learn in a safe and happy environment. All requirements for child protection and the safeguarding of pupils are in place, are regularly reviewed and meet government requirements. Health and safety checks are regular and thorough. Attendance is monitored very effectively, leading to excellent outcomes. The school's strong links with external agencies help the school to provide good support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, when required.

Marking is generally completed in a timely way, but its quality is variable. At its best, marking shows pupils precisely how to improve their work but this good practice is not universal. Effective whole-school assessment procedures are in place and pupils are set targets. However, these are often too general and not always precise enough or matched to pupils' needs to enable them to know exactly what they need to do next to move forward in their learning at a good pace. School leaders are aware of this weakness and are taking steps to improve provision in this area.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Pucklechurch is an inclusive and tolerant community which rightly prides itself on its commitment to develop the whole child through high quality care and support. The headteacher and recently restructured senior leadership team have focused the school on raising levels of achievement and improving teaching, and clear next steps have been identified to continue improvement into the future. Good systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the actions taken by the school are now in place. Leaders and managers understand the school's strengths and areas that are in need of further development. Although middle managers are becoming more proficient in setting and reaching challenging targets, their full impact has yet to be seen in ensuring consistently good or better progress for all pupils. For the same reason, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory at this stage. Though self-evaluation is strong and senior managers set a very clear direction, the impact of the school's actions has not yet fully worked through.

The school is making a satisfactory contribution towards community cohesion within the school and the local community, and has a strategy to develop it more widely. Also, the school has yet to fully evaluate the impact of its actions on the immediate community beyond the school. Strategies to promote equality of opportunity are strongly endorsed by an enthusiastic and supportive governing body which discharges its statutory functions well and plays an active part in the life of the school. Its role with regard to monitoring and evaluation is not yet well developed, although it is becoming more adept in holding the school to account for its performance. Management of resources, including financial stewardship, is satisfactory. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the quality of communication between home and school and some aspects of the way in which the school is led and managed, but this was not the view of most.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective,efficient and inclusive is the provision of education,integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2

The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

¹ Grade 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.

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pucklechurch CofE VC Primary School, Bristol BS16 9RF

Thank you very much for your welcome when we visited your school. We think you are getting a satisfactory education. We noticed that your behaviour was good in and out of lessons, and that you were friendly and cooperative with one another and with adults. You feel welcomed and are proud to be a part of the school. Staff are happy to help you and take care to make sure you are happy and doing well. You enjoy the visits and visitors to your school and appreciate the after school clubs that are on offer.

- The main things that we found out about your school are:
- Most of you make satisfactory progress, comparing how much you have achieved when you leave Pucklechurch to start at secondary school with what you were like when you started at the school.
- You develop good personal skills to help you do well at school and in later life when you are adults.
- The attendance levels at the school are excellent.
- There are lots of good lessons taught at your school, but some of them could be a bit more challenging.
- For many pupils, and especially some of the boys, writing is the weakest skill in literacy.
- There is a good range of subjects for you to study in lessons with many opportunities to take part in activities at lunchtime and after school.

- So that your school can improve in the future, we have asked the headteacher and the governors to make sure that:
 - those of you who are making slower progress are helped to improve
 - teachers take extra care in making sure that they know how well you have done in each lesson and then to plan work that follows on from wherever you have got to
 - you improve your writing, especially in Years 1 and 2.

Good luck for the future and keep up all your hard work in helping the school to get even better.

Ken Bush

Lead inspector