

Pen Mill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123725
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340407
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2010
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Sibley
Headteacher	Mrs M House
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 May 2007
School address	St Michaels Avenue Yeovil Somerset BA21 4LD
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw eight lessons and six teachers and held meetings with parents, staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's policies, assessments, plans and 59 parental questionnaires.

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

- The quality of pupils' progress and their attainment, both currently and over time.
- How well children are progressing in the Early Years Foundation Stage to establish whether it has improved since the previous inspection.
- The quality of the curriculum and how well it promotes pupils' interest and learning.

Information about the school

Pen Mill Infant School is smaller than the average sized primary school and has an above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. It has below average proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and almost all speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; the largest group of these pupils has speech, language and communication difficulties.

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

Pen Mill Infants is an outstanding school. It meets the needs of all of its pupils, with the result that they move from below expected skills at the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage to high attainment by the end of Year 2. This is excellent progress and pupils' achievement is outstanding. Improvements since the previous inspection are a testament to excellent leadership and management. The headteacher plays a significant role in inspiring her colleagues to enact her vision of a school 'relentless in our pursuit of excellence' – a caring, high achieving school where pupils are highly valued and encouraged to be their best. Governors make a good contribution to leadership and management, although some aspects of their monitoring are underdeveloped.

Pupils' personal development is good and some elements are outstanding. Behaviour is good and contributes to the highly positive atmosphere in lessons. Pupils demonstrate a profound understanding of healthy diet, joining in cookery clubs with their parents and carers and thus influencing the repertoire of food produced at home. The surveys of lunchboxes conducted by pupils place them in the position of ambassadors for eating well. They enjoy healthy snacks and lunches at school, well aware of the importance of eating fruit and vegetables. In addition, pupils' responses to the sports opportunities on offer are lively and their enthusiasm leads to an excellent understanding of how to grow up healthily.

A fascinating curriculum and outstanding teaching ensure learning is very effective and enjoyable. Pupils are well cared for, high quality assessment enables their needs to be well known and pupils and parents and carers are strongly supported to overcome any barriers to learning and development. Excellent partnerships with parents and carers are a significant component in the school's high achievement. The very large majority are fully supportive of the school, one parent typically commenting, 'All three of my children love going here to school, the staff are so caring.' However, a small group of parents do not always send their children to school regularly so that, despite considerable efforts by the school, attendance remains average.

The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The ambition of leaders and managers in driving improvement has raised attainment and led to enhanced teaching and progress. Assessment and other information are perceptively used to identify priorities for the future and eliminate underperformance. Plans for the future are focused on maintaining and improving outcomes for all pupils. The

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school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing good practice and exceptional links with parents to promote higher attendance.
- By January 2011, establish systems to ensure that the governing body more regularly evaluates the school so that it can provide even more confident and consistent challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils enter Year 1 with average attainment and leave Year 2 with high attainment. The very inclusive nature of the school and its thorough use of assessment, very well managed by the headteacher, enable staff to identify pupils who would benefit from extra support. High quality interventions are very successful in helping pupils overcome learning and other difficulties and this means that all groups progress very rapidly and achieve very well.

Outstanding teaching focuses consistently on promoting strong learning outcomes for pupils. Work is carefully tailored to all pupils' needs. High expectations and challenging activities push pupils on in lessons, so learning is outstanding. For example, in an excellent Year 1 and 2 lesson, the thorough planning and preparation and skilled work from the teacher and teaching assistant working as a team catered very well for each pupil's needs, challenging and supporting in equal measure and enabling all to make rapid progress. Consistently high quality provision ensures excellent progress and outstanding achievement of all groups of pupils.

Most pupils are keen to contribute to the school community, with older ones volunteering for responsibilities, such as acting as 'buddies' keeping an eye out for younger ones on the playground. Many have been involved in fundraising for charities by, for example, selling home-made cakes. The school council provides a good forum for pupils' voices to be heard and their wishes are given a sympathetic hearing by school leaders.

Behaviour is good, both in classrooms and in the playground and there is very little bullying. Consistent implementation of behavioural routines by all adults means pupils are aware of their boundaries, responding quickly to any reminders about quiet movement and being sensible. Pupils are considerate of their peers and quick to applaud achievements. Detailed support plans for those with long-term behaviour problems are frequently effective in restoring individuals' equilibrium. Pupils of all ages say they feel safe at school and are confident that any issue they raise is fully dealt with. They understand the need for routines to keep them safe, for example when leaving the playground and during fire drill. They know how to avoid risks, for instance on the busy roads near the school, because they all receive good road safety training.

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Pupils successfully apply their excellent skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology across the broad range of challenges offered by the curriculum. They develop personal qualities such as independence and cooperation outstandingly well. Attendance remains close to average, despite herculean efforts by the school, because there are pockets of persistent absence.

Pupils’ good moral and social development is evident in consistently good behaviour and attitudes. Mixed age classes ensure younger ones have positive role models and pupils demonstrate a common sense of values. New pupils from different ethnic groups are immediately and unconditionally accepted into the school and often provide opportunities for reflection on different lifestyles. Pupils keenly embrace the numerous opportunities for broadening their understanding through artistic and cultural events.

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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The richness and variety of stimulating learning experiences lead to outstanding outcomes for pupils. Plans linked to themes combine subjects creatively, so that pupils are provided with authentic and fascinating activities, which they remember. Regular ‘Inspire Days’, tackling interesting topics that touch all subjects, live up to their name. Such lively activities promote the development of pupils’ skills when, for example, they enthusiastically write about what they have experienced. Pupils took great pleasure in doing work in their gardens that was inspired by their literacy work.

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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Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from carefully adapted, highly tailored work, systematically renewed to meet their changing needs. Planning in Years 1 and 2 leads to well-paced lessons where pupils learn in a carefully structured environment but have considerable opportunities to work independently.

The school produces regular, accessible assessment information about each child. Teachers use this exceptionally well to plan lessons, so that all pupils benefit from activities closely suited to their needs and interests. This precision pays great dividends because it ensures lessons are relevant, interesting and highly focused on learning outcomes. Most teachers provide a good balance between support and challenge, so pupils work at full stretch. Effective marking and up-to-date assessment data feed into clear personal targets for pupils so they know how to improve their work.

Teachers display very good subject knowledge and use this to inspire pupils as well as challenge them. Questioning is frequently probing and stretches pupils’ capabilities. Lessons are varied in their activities and pupils rarely spend long on any one task, maintaining their interest and the pace of learning. Pupils say they enjoy lessons, and this is evident in their consistently good behaviour and willingness to engage with their learning. Teachers treat pupils with kindness and respect and this is reciprocated. Those who need firm handling are well managed by teachers and teaching assistants, so there is little disruption to the smooth progress of learning. Teaching assistants are capable and proactive, and they provide strong support for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. Those who would benefit from the extra help afforded by small group or one-to-one work are identified early and the focused assistance they receive is most effective.

There are well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils and these are appreciated by many parents. The school makes significant efforts with children and whole families to overcome barriers and promote pupils’ self-esteem and engagement with school life. In many cases, this work has a striking impact on the lives of pupils in difficult circumstances. The school website is well used to provide catch-up arrangements for pupils who may miss school due to bad weather. Arrangements to smooth pupils’ transfer into Year 3 are comprehensive and close liaison with the partner junior school means that pupils prepare for moving on with calm confidence.

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	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Rigorous monitoring and self-analysis provides the school with an accurate view of itself and its context and leads to the setting of challenging targets. The school has used this searching analysis to devise ambitious and effective plans for the future. It also utilises its rigorous monitoring of teaching and its assessment to challenge all staff to perform well, and this has improved teaching. The early identification of pupils who are likely to underachieve triggers rapid interventions, tailored to need, ensuring the school provides equality of opportunity for all and that there is no discrimination.

The governing body is very supportive and engages well with pupils, parents and carers. Members' evaluation of the school is reliant on information from the headteacher, but overall, governors are developing an understanding of test data and use this to improve their understanding. A lack of systematic independent monitoring in the past means the governing body has not always been able to offer a rigorous challenge. The governing body systematically monitors safeguarding arrangements, ensuring that all requirements are conscientiously met. Although there is more to do to tighten up on some aspects, staff are aware of individual pupils' circumstances and identify those who are most at risk, and pupils are kept safe.

The school has extremely positive relationships with all groups of parents and carers and takes numerous initiatives to engage those who lack confidence in associating with the school. A mother and baby group gives excellent guidance on parenting and provides an early opportunity for parents and carers to engage with the school. Parents' and carers' views are regularly sought and acted upon. For example, the regular 'Inspire Days' involving parents and their children in practical and investigational activities are regularly followed up with simple questionnaires to glean parents' and carers' views. These influence future plans. Information for parents and carers, including letters from the governing body, is plentiful and accurate.

Partnerships with local primary, secondary and tertiary education providers bring very considerable benefits. The Yeovil federation funds curriculum initiatives and opportunities for teachers to share good practice and plan together. Strong links with a local special school have led to improved pupil and staff understanding of children's emotional needs. The school sports partnership provides expertise for the school and funds competitive sport. The school works hard to promote good community cohesion, regularly updating the audit of its contributions and acting on the outcomes. It has links of varying intensity with schools in Ghana, Qatar, Australia and France and is pursuing an association with institutions in other parts of the United Kingdom. The school is proactive in promoting local cohesion, for example implementing programmes of activities to welcome incoming families from Poland, Portugal and other countries.

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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	2
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	2
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 enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age. They move into Year 1 with attainment that is broadly average in all areas of learning. This represents good progress. Children make particularly good gains in social skills, such as confidence and independence. They are happy and enjoy their activities, developing very good learning routines and showing consistently good behaviour. In consequence, they are very well equipped to start Year 1.

The rich curriculum, good resources and very stimulating learning environment promote children’s interest and good learning. Thorough planning and detailed organisation enables children to access a range of activities, both indoors and out, that support independent learning. Adults have a consistent approach, high expectations and good relationships with children, and the atmosphere throughout the stage is calm and purposeful. Thorough ongoing assessment provides a clear picture of each child’s development, facilitating planning for individual needs and interests. Probing questioning from adults is useful but there are times when children’s play is insufficiently extended because they are not fully challenged.

The newly established co-ordinator works alongside the headteacher and has not been able to monitor as much as she would like this term because of staff absence. However, she has identified aspects that need improvement and has taken action that is developing provision. Recommendations made in the previous inspection report, including those about assessment, have been comprehensively addressed. Health and safety are a high priority and there are very effective procedures to keep children secure. Links with parents and carers are very strong and teachers pass on information that enables many to offer better support to their children at home.

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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

The response to inspection questionnaires indicates that almost all parents and carers wholeheartedly support the school. All respondents said their children enjoy school, that the school supports their child’s needs, helps them support their child’s learning and prepares pupils well for the future. A very small minority expressed concerns over leadership and management, behaviour and safeguarding. The inspection found leadership and management are outstanding, behaviour is good and pupils are safe at school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pen Mill 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 178 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	76	13	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	80	9	15	2	3	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	66	17	29	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	76	10	17	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	83	8	14	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	66	20	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	61	22	37	1	2	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)	39	66	19	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	71	17	29	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	42	27	46	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	51	25	42	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	71	14	24	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	76	13	22	1	2	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. 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 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.



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pen Mill Infant School, Yeovil BA21 4LD

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to the inspectors when we recently visited your school. It was lovely meeting you and very good to hear how much you enjoy school.

We find Pen Mill Infants to be an outstanding school. You make excellent progress and, by the time you leave, reach standards well above most other seven-year-olds in the country. We congratulate you on your development as independent and well-behaved young people. All these good things happen because the headteacher and staff run the school so excellently and because teaching is outstanding.

Like most schools, some things need improving. I have asked the school to pay attention to the following:

- to keep trying hard to improve attendance.
- for the governing body to have better systems to check up on how things are going so they can challenge the school even more effectively.

You can help the school by never staying away unless you really have to.

Many thanks for all your help. It was a great pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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