

Mount Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113281
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	378680
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Hancock HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Gooch
Headteacher	Sandra Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	31 September–1 October 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons or part-lessons taught by eight teachers. The inspectors looked at pupils' work in a sample of books and heard several pupils from Key Stage 1 read. The inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers. The lead inspector also had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.

The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also analysed questionnaires from 102 parents and carers, 48 pupils and 15 staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school's policies, plans for improvement, and data on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.

Information about the school

Mount Street Primary School is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This proportion has increased substantially since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils whose first language is other than English has also risen markedly and is much higher than found in most schools. The proportion of pupils that are known to be eligible for free school meals is also higher than the average. While the overall proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to other schools, a higher than average proportion has more complex needs. A higher than usual number of pupils enter and leave the school at different times. There is a privately run childcare facility onsite that was not visited during this inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the school has become a Foundation school and a member of the Lipsom Learning Cooperative Trust. The school's work has been recognised by several awards, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the International Schools award, the Healthy Eating award and the Bristol Standard accreditation.

In 2011, the school's performance fell below the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school that is improving strongly following a period of staff turbulence and uneven performance. It is not a good school yet because pupils do not make better than expected progress over time consistently across Key Stage 2. The school has adapted well to significant changes in its community. Pupils with complex needs, many of whom join the school other than at the usual times, are cared for and supported very well.
- From low starting points, children’s good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is sustained across Key Stage 1. In recent years, progress across Key Stage 2 has been similar to other schools. Pupils’ attainment when they leave school is broadly in line with the average. The proportions of pupils that reach the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics are rising strongly, but remain low in some year groups, particularly in writing.
- The quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall, has improved and has several strengths. Some variability remains so pupils do not make good progress consistently in all lessons over time. Teaching is directed sharply on what pupils most need to know, but pupils do not always have a sufficiently clear understanding of their long-term targets and how to progress to the next level.
- Pupils’ good behaviour and very positive attitudes towards their learning make a significant contribution to the purposeful atmosphere within lessons. Pupils feel very safe and have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe when undertaking a range of activities.
- Leaders have an exceptionally clear understanding about the quality of teaching and learning. Levels of accountability are high and staff performance is managed particularly well. The school works with a wide range of partners to deliver an imaginative and engaging curriculum. Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is developed very well.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, increase the proportions of pupils that reach securely the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils understand their long-term learning targets more clearly and the small steps they need to take to progress to the next level
 - making greater use of pupils' own work to illustrate the key features and progression of skills between levels
 - increasing pupils' understanding of important words and strategies by making greater reference to them within lessons
 - making sure that teachers' comments in books guide pupils consistently on how to improve their work.
- Sustain and share the identified strong features of teaching across the school so that pupils make good progress in all lessons and achieve well over time, particularly across Key Stage 2.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start in the Nursery class with levels of development much lower than those expected. High quality play and learning activities mean they make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage. The high priority given to developing personal and social skills is evident in children's ability to make choices and play cooperatively with others. In one session seen, a boy from the Reception class confidently instructed three girls from the Nursery class how and when to play their musical instruments. Levels of development on leaving the Reception class are close to those expected, but lower in writing and calculating. Pupils' good progress is maintained across Key Stage 1 and their levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are broadly average. Progress has been more variable in Key Stage 2 and at times pupils do not make the progress they should. Progress has picked up recently, but the school's internal assessment information shows that progress last year was only satisfactory. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 are not significantly different to the average. The proportions of pupils securely at the levels expected for their age are low in some year groups, particularly in writing.

In lessons and when reading to adults, younger pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, were seen drawing successfully on their knowledge of letters and sounds to decode unfamiliar words. Older pupils were observed effectively building words up and using their comprehension skills to offer thoughtful viewpoints on the text. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because of the capable assistance they receive from well-trained adults. Carefully planned programmes of support, such as one for mathematics in Key Stage 1, ensure that tasks are matched closely to their individual needs. A

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similar programme in Year 4 for pupils whose first language is other than English has accelerated their progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Almost all parents and carers that returned the questionnaires believed their child was making good progress, but the inspectors found that pupils' progress over time was not consistently good across the school.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved and was good in most lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers' confident knowledge of subjects enables them to question pupils effectively through high quality interactions. In the best lessons seen, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, well-planned engaging activities enabled pupils to learn by doing. This was particularly evident in a literacy lesson seen in Year 1. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked a group of pupils to follow her instructions carefully to demonstrate their understanding of positional language. They walked sensibly to several areas of the classroom to look 'over', 'under' and 'between' different objects, retrieving a coloured cube in each location before finally locating the teaching assistant's lost pair of glasses. Memorable experiences such as these deepen pupils' learning. In a few lessons seen, pupils made less progress because the level of challenge was variable, teacher explanations took too long and pupils were not questioned incisively about their learning. At times, opportunities are missed to promote key skills and vocabulary.

Teachers use assessment information effectively to focus teaching on the areas least understood by pupils. There are well-established systems for setting short-term learning goals, but pupils are not sufficiently clear about their long-term targets or how to reach the next level. Engaging and purposeful displays support the learning in lessons. While pupils' work is used often to illustrate key features, progression between levels is less clear. Pupils generally receive informative feedback on their work through colour-coded marking. Nevertheless, teachers' comments in books do not always guide pupils on how to improve their work.

Pupil's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted very effectively in lessons. This was a strong feature of a Year 6 lesson seen, where pupils compared their experiences to life in a linked primary school in India. Throughout the lesson, the teacher moved between groups, skilfully communicating her expectations for collaboration and teamworking. As a result, the pupils worked very successfully in small groups, pooling ideas and sharing tasks. The curriculum provides well thought out experiences delivered through a variety of partners. The take-up of enrichment opportunities is tracked comprehensively by the school.

The vast majority of parents and carers express positive views on the quality of teaching. The inspectors found that there are several strengths in teaching, but over time it has been more variable in Key Stage 2.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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Most pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are interested and engaged by their learning in lessons, which contributes to their high levels of enjoyment of school. Parents, carers and pupils agree with inspectors that behaviour is good. All pupils mix well and support each other regardless of their age, background or the length of time they have been in school. During the inspection, pupils spoke positively about being able to move between playgrounds and the difference that 'play pods' had made to their playtimes: comments such as 'Everyone loves that' and 'There is always something different' were representative of their views. Pupils behave well at other times; for example, they walk sensibly in corridors and hold doors open courteously for guests. Pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour respond very well to the school's strategies, such as the use of behaviour report cards. Incidents of bullying, including racial abuse, are rare and responded to promptly. Scrutiny of behavioural records shows that this is the case over time too.

There is a strong school ethos for keeping safe and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to do so. Children in the Nursery class have made 'stranger danger' posters and children in the Reception class remind each other to protect their hands with gloves when planting tomato plants. In discussions, older pupils report how assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons have enabled them to speak confidently about the risks associated with fireworks, crossing the road and using the internet. The school's firm response to term-time holiday requests and close working with partner agencies have improved pupils' attendance, but this remains below the average.

Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone a period of change that has placed additional demands on leaders and managers. There have been several disruptions in staffing and the school's community has changed markedly. For a while, performance was uneven, but it has improved strongly this year. One reason for this is because the headteacher, supported by other capable leaders, has improved the quality of teaching through staff training. Key features have been agreed and teachers have videoed their own lessons to evaluate how well they question the pupils. Another reason is because the levels of accountability in the school are strong. Each teacher completes an accountability report on the progress that pupils are making which informs the regular meetings to plan further support. Leaders' analysis of data is thorough and detailed, but the key headlines are not always summarised succinctly.

The school has an accurate view of itself because procedures for monitoring and reviewing the school's work are robust and lead to well-informed plans for improvement. The governing body play an active role to support and challenge. For example, members participate in an annual review of the school development plan and have recently evaluated the quality of subject coordinator reports.

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Arrangements for keeping pupils safe are robust and meet current requirements. Roles and responsibilities are clear and supported by regular training. The noticeable improvements in the achievement of different pupil groups, such those whose first language is other than English, are evidence of the school's commitment to equal opportunities. Improvements to the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and attendance demonstrate the school has good capacity for further improvement.

The school works with a wide range of partners to provide pupils with imaginative learning opportunities, such as a recent visit to the marine biology department at a nearby university. Art galleries, theatres and museums are also visited on a regular basis and there are frequent opportunities for pupils to practise key skills in other subjects. For example, pupils recently wrote poetry as part of a geography trip to Dartmoor. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is also developed well. Visiting faith group representatives promote pupils' wider cultural understanding and the school's link with a school in India enables pupils to consider similarities and differences with a contrasting locality. Members of the school council play an active role in the life of the school and can point to several examples of things that have changed as a result of their efforts.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



23 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mount Street Primary School, Plymouth PL4 8NZ

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we carried out our recent inspection. Thank you to those who talked to us and completed our questionnaire. It was very useful to have your views. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and is improving quickly after a lot of changes.

Here are some of the best things about your school:

- The youngest children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Teaching has got better so you are making greater progress in lessons and more of you are reaching the levels expected for age.
- Adults in the school take very good care of you so that you enjoy school and your good behaviour helps you learn in lessons.
- The school develops your personal skills and wider understanding well.

Those in charge of your school want to make it even better, so we have asked them to make sure that you make good progress all of the time, particularly in your writing. They will do this by making sure that all your lessons are good ones. Your teachers will help you understand how to reach your long-term learning targets and what you need to do reach the next level. They will also help you to learn important words and skills.

You can play your part by remembering your learning targets and carefully following the instructions you are given to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

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