

Victoria Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113289
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	357310
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sara Orchard
Headteacher	Kevin Duggan
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed and 11 teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, reports from the School Improvement Partner and a range of other documentation. One hundred and eleven responses to the parental questionnaire were received and analysed, together with 121 pupil and 29 staff responses to their respective questionnaires.

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

- The effectiveness of teaching in raising rates of progress, particularly for girls.
- The impact that teaching and the curriculum have on pupils' enjoyment and aspiration.
- The effect of shared leadership, including governance, on school improvement.
- The impact of current provision on outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This average sized school serves its local area in St Budeaux, Plymouth. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. An above average percentage of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including behavioural, moderate and specific learning difficulties. Two teachers had joined the school two weeks before the inspection took place and there has been a temporary teacher working in the Early Years Foundation Stage for the last five months. There is a children's centre, not managed by the school, operating in the same building as the school that is subject to separate inspection.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Victoria Road is a good school. Significant improvement since the time of its last inspection means that some aspects of the school are already outstanding and some others are poised to be so. From low starting points, pupils make overall good progress throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and they leave the school with broadly average attainments. Very skilful and targeted support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and some of the more vulnerable pupils means that they make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress for the majority, although good overall, is better in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. The school has put in place a number of initiatives to attempt to improve writing skills and there is strong emphasis on basic skills, such as sentence construction and punctuation, which is having good impact. However, pupils have poorly developed spoken language skills that are impeding their progress in writing. This is particularly the case for pupils of middle and higher ability. The school has worked hard to improve the progress of girls and the gap between their progress and that of boys is steadily reducing.

Good teaching and a lively curriculum ensure that pupils enjoy school. Pupils particularly like and benefit from the wide range of enrichment activities planned for them. Skilled teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting pupils when they are working individually or in groups. However, teachers do not involve these staff as much as they could in helping to assess the pupils' attainment and progress. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Because of the school's outstanding quality of care and guidance and of safeguarding procedures, pupils feel exceptionally safe and supported. They report that any problems or troubles they may have are rapidly dealt with. Pupils play an exceptionally strong part in helping the school to run well as a community, not least because they behave well. They enthusiastically join in with the wide range of opportunities they have to be good citizens, in school and beyond. The school itself plays a significant role in the local community and its links, both those to promote the quality of provision for the pupils, and those which support others beyond the school, are of high quality and impact.

Exceptional and dedicated leadership by the headteacher has ensured that the school has a clear vision for improvement that it strives to achieve. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and a team of senior staff is playing an increasingly effective role in school self-evaluation and improvement. Governors are taking an active part in supporting these processes. Regular monitoring provides accurate information upon which to plan developments. A large number of initiatives have been started and some, such as work to improve the quality of teachers' marking, now need a little time to embed before they are fully consistent. The track record of improvement and the developing leadership team that has the full support of other staff mean that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in writing by systematically developing spoken language skills, particularly among middle and higher attaining pupils.
- Increase the contribution of teaching assistants in helping teachers to assess their pupils, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' enjoyment of school has risen significantly since the school's last inspection. Their enjoyment and attention are particularly good when teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is most marked, such as in a very effective Spanish lesson when pupils confidently and enthusiastically used new vocabulary in a range of games. Pupils know and try hard to meet the targets set for them, for example making great efforts to improve their handwriting and spelling. Pupils with particular speech and language difficulty are supported well to make good and often outstanding progress, but middle and higher attaining pupils struggle to express themselves both orally and on paper. They are keen to talk about what they do in school, but are often not able to communicate what they want to say or discuss what they have done because they lack the vocabulary and fluency so to do. Overall, pupils behave well and those with particular difficulty in managing their behaviour are helped to gain increasing self-control. Pupils have good knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy, although they admit they do not always eat as healthily as they know they should. Through the school parliament and through a wide range of activities, such as acting as mediators in minor disputes, they take an active part in running and improving the school. Links with a number of schools across the world are giving them knowledge of the variety of ways in which people live internationally. Their knowledge of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom is, however, not yet as strong. The way pupils are taught to work collaboratively and the development of basic skills, as well as initiatives to help them gain economic understanding, are helping them to be well prepared for later life.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The particular emphasis on the development of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics is a strength of both the curriculum and teaching. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher encouraged pupils to identify where he had made mistakes in calculations in order to encourage active thinking about accuracy and method. Teachers manage their pupils very well, so lessons are conducted harmoniously. They take care to explain things clearly to the pupils so that they are enabled to understand and learn. They provide clear models of what they expect the pupils to achieve in their reading, writing and mathematics and sensitively correct them when they make mistakes. This practice is not as systematic in helping pupils to improve spoken language. Similarly, the curriculum identifies how skills in reading, writing and mathematics will be developed, but a systematic approach to the development of speaking and listening skills is not yet in place. Teaching assistants show great skill when they are working with individuals and groups, but there are parts of the lesson when they could be making a greater contribution by providing the teacher with extra information about how well the pupils are doing. The curriculum is strong in promoting pupils' personal development, for example through the emphasis placed on the knowledge of how to live healthily. The school seizes every opportunity to extend pupils' experience and knowledge and they enjoy and benefit from a range of interesting activities; for example, working with a Chinese artist, with members of a local basketball team and going on a residential trip to France. Exemplary care, guidance and support mean pupils feel individually known and valued. There is particularly strong

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support for more troubled and vulnerable pupils. Strong action taken to improve attendance is paying off, and current attendance is average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is determined to ensure that the school provides increasingly effective education for the pupils. He is fully supported in his vision by senior and other staff. Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness, and actions planned on the basis of this, means that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and leads to successful development. Good tracking of pupils' progress means that individuals and groups whose progress is not as rapid as others are identified and supported. This approach helps promote equality of opportunity and has been successful in closing gaps in progress, such as that between girls and boys. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and proactive in supporting developments, as well as being assiduous in holding the school to account for the effectiveness of the education provided. Governors have ensured, through their direct involvement, that safeguarding is extremely well addressed. They have taken an active role in promoting community cohesion, especially through the support given to another local school. This has not only been to the benefit of others, but has widened the pupils' knowledge of their own city. This forms part of the very effective partnerships forged by the school. Community cohesion work has extended to wide-ranging international links, but the governors are correct in wanting to strengthen provision with respect to the community in the United Kingdom. Resources are well managed and the school is skilled in attracting funding to help it increase the range of partnerships that provide increased curricular opportunities for pupils.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The school continues to provide well for children in the Reception class, despite the current temporary teaching arrangements. The children are making good progress overall and their progress is particularly strong in their personal, social and emotional development. Despite their good progress, many of the children do not reach the expected goals for their age in aspects other than their personal development. The weakest element of their attainment is in their spoken language development which is often low. Teaching and the curriculum provided are both good. All adults try hard, with considerable skill, to help the children learn to work and play together. They use good levels of language in order to try to address the particular difficulties of the children. The classroom provides a wide variety of types of activity, with good opportunities to work indoors and outside, independently and with adults. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in knowing when to stand back and allow the children to take control and when to intervene with a question or suggestion. This was demonstrated when two boys were trying to make a smooth slope for their cars to run down. A well-timed question allowed them to consider whether the pipe they were using as a ramp was long enough and then to find a longer one. This promoted both their problem-solving skills and their early mathematics development. New assessment procedures are helping the teacher to build a picture of each child's progress, but at present, much of the knowledge that teaching assistants have about the children is lost, because they are not fully involved in the process. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has maintained, and begun to develop, the effectiveness of the provision despite the temporary teaching arrangement.

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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 vast majority of the parents and carers are happy with the education provided for their child. They are particularly positive about the way their child is kept safe, that they are helped to live a healthy lifestyle and are well prepared for their future lives. They also like the good quality of teaching their child receives. Inspectors agree with these positive views. A small number of parents and carers feel unacceptable behaviour is not well managed. Inspection findings are that most pupils behave well and the few who have more difficulty in doing this are helped to improve.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 233 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	42	56	50	7	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	50	51	46	3	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	41	58	52	7	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	41	57	51	7	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	42	59	53	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	42	57	51	6	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	44	56	50	4	4	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	35	62	56	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	40	60	54	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	32	59	53	10	9	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	32	61	55	9	8	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	47	42	57	51	3	3	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	42	57	51	5	5	1	1

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.



18 March 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Victoria Road Primary School, Plymouth, PL5 1RH

We really enjoyed our time at your school and would like to thank you for the way you made us feel welcome. We are really pleased that you like going to school and agree with you that yours is a good school of which you are rightly proud.

Some of the things we like best are:

- the progress you make in learning to read and in mathematics
- the interesting and exciting activities that are planned to help you learn
- the way teachers explain things to you very clearly, so you are sure of what you are expected to learn and produce
- the way adults care for you and make you feel very safe and secure
- the contribution you make in helping your school run well and to making the world in which you live a better place
- the work all the adults in the school do in helping to make your school even better. We think your headteacher needs a special pat on the back for all the work he does for you.

In order to improve things further we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- help you to improve your writing by developing your spoken language
- make even better use of teaching assistants to help your teachers to assess how well you are doing.

We know that you will continue to help adults in the school to make it even better and we wish you every success in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Onions

Lead inspector

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