

Plympton St Maurice Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113316
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	395529
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2012
Lead inspector	Ronald Hall

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Gerry
Headteacher	Sarah Tustain
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2008
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	3–4 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ronald Hall

Additional Inspector

Anne Wesley

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by seven teachers. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to pupils' progress, school improvement, writing and attendance. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, local authority officers and pupils. The inspectors took account of the views of 70 parents and carers who returned the questionnaires sent out prior to the inspection and those questionnaires returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the normal times is high. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is above average. There are average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The headteacher took up her post in September 2011. There is a Children's Centre on the school site but this is not run by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Due to good leadership and management, it is rapidly improving, following a period of falling standards. Pupils and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that the school has a happy, caring and family-like environment. The school is not outstanding because the proportion of consistently good or better teaching is not yet high enough to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils make good progress and current data shows that attainment is above average in Key Stage 2. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is generally good across the school but is occasionally inconsistent where teaching is not as strong.
- Teaching is usually good and occasionally excellent. In most lessons, work is interesting, challenging and fast-paced. However, where lessons are less interesting, pace and challenge are also lacking. Many lessons have opportunities for pupils to work independently. Occasionally there is not enough variation in the teaching methods used, which sometimes leads to short spells of inattention by pupils. In these lessons, there are often limited opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of independent thinking, for example through creative work such as drama. This is particularly so in subjects other than English and mathematics. Marking is at least good, and often excellent.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards others ensure that bullying is rare; pupils feel safe and behaviour is good. Pupils demonstrate good skills in managing their own behaviour and have good attitudes to learning.
- School leaders use self-evaluation and performance management processes well to ensure that teaching is rapidly improving in English and mathematics. However, this monitoring has not included non-core subjects and has had less impact on developing teachers' skills in these subjects. Leaders and managers rigorously evaluate the impact of improvements on pupils' progress.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2013, raise the proportion of teaching that is consistently good or outstanding by January 2013 by:
 - focusing sharply on ensuring high levels of pace and challenge in lessons through the monitoring of teaching and learning
 - widening monitoring to include lessons other than literacy and mathematics.
- Improve the curriculum by giving pupils more opportunities to develop their skills of independent learning and thinking through creative work such as drama.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development which are usually in line with expectations. Reading skills develop well through constructive interaction with staff when learning about letters and sounds. Children are challenged well while developing their writing skills through a wide range of activities that provide good opportunities for them to write simple sentences. A focus on exciting and varied activities has been the basis for improvement recently in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and ensures that children make good progress and enter Year 1 with attainment that is now above average.

Even though mobility in the school is high, pupils achieve well overall in Years 1 to 6, making good progress from their starting points. In lessons, they respond with a highly positive attitude to opportunities that allow them to work in small groups. For example, in a good Year 3 English lesson, pupils worked together well to create their own characters in a myth. In good mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2, pupils explored and challenged Pythagoras' theories, while enacting a Greek day. This gave the pupils an added impetus to learn and provided understanding of the subject development.

Recent improvements in teaching have led to better progress in lessons but pupils do not yet have opportunities in every subject to be creative and independent learners. Gaps between any groups of pupils in terms of attainment are closing rapidly. Inspection evidence and pupils' current work indicate that attainment in English and mathematics is above average by the end of Key Stage 2, as is attainment in reading at the end of both key stages.

Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their peers. Pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal times make similar progress to others. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress because their needs are identified early and they are provided with a good level of well-targeted support. Parents and carers are rightly of the opinion that the progress their

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children make is good.

Quality of teaching

Consistently good lesson planning makes increasingly effective use of a range of assessment information in response to focused staff training. Targets for pupils form the basis for feedback and allow pupils to assess their own learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers identify clear learning objectives and specify precisely what pupils need to do to demonstrate that the objectives have been achieved. The use of excellent written feedback with examples aids pupils' ability to understand how to improve. Due to the monitoring of lessons being focused on the core subjects, the delivery of some other lessons sometimes lacks creativity and imagination. As a result, in some lessons progress is slower and a few pupils are not as attentive as they might be. School leaders recognise the potential for wider use of initiatives such as the 'Greek Day', or greater use of drama, art or computers to create greater enthusiasm and develop wider independent skills.

Teachers are increasingly taking good account of pupils' interests through appropriate and planned adaptations to the curriculum. Teachers effectively present a wide variety of tasks that suit different learning styles and engage pupils well. Purposeful links are made between subjects through activities that have strong connections with the real-life application of the skills being learned. This contributes strongly to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

All lessons feature good questioning that develops learning effectively, because teachers set high expectations for pupils' responses, ensuring that time is given for developed answers. This was demonstrated well during a Year 5 mathematics lesson, where questions from pupils were reflected back to provide challenge and opportunity to think more deeply about the concepts being studied. However, where teaching is not as strong, lessons lack pace and challenge.

Teaching assistants are deployed well to support the learning and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This ensures that their independence is promoted during challenging learning activities. A majority of parents and carers feel that their child is taught well at this school. Inspection evidence supports this view overall.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe, both generally and in relation to e-safety. Pupils feel very safe and staff, parents and carers unanimously and justifiably concur. Adults approach welfare issues in a caring and considerate manner, resulting in pupils effectively controlling their own behaviour and developing a positive attitude to learning. The majority of pupils are very positive about behaviour. As one put it, 'Sometimes some people can be silly but this is never serious and we all get on with each other.' All feel, rightly, that behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils make a positive contribution to their own and others' learning. During

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the inspection, nothing but good behaviour was seen across the whole school and this is said by parents, carers, pupils and staff to be typical. Meticulously kept records show that there are only very occasional instances of misbehaviour, and no exclusions. There have been no recorded instances of bullying of any kind, and pupils confirm that this is accurate.

There has only been one issue relating to racism, sexist or homophobic behaviour. Pupils unanimously say that staff deal with all types of issues very well. Pupils take pride in their work and try hard to do their best in lessons. As far as possible, pupils are fully involved in assessing their own performance and that of others. They are encouraged to make choices in different situations, to be focused on achieving their targets and have respect for all. Attendance is above average.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels, including members of the governing body, have a good understanding of what the school does well and the areas it needs to focus on to improve further. Staff work closely together and share a common vision for the school and its continued improvement. The improvements in teaching over time show that the school has been able to maintain good achievement for pupils and has good capacity to improve further.

Leaders and managers at all levels promote equality and tackle discrimination well. The caring school ethos and emphasis on whole-school approaches fully include disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as those from minority ethnic groups. School leaders and governors ensure arrangements for safeguarding pupils are managed appropriately.

Improvements in pupils' progress have been achieved following ongoing professional development, including effective mentoring for all staff. This has been particularly successful in improving assessment practice and promoting the more effective use of questioning. While some aspects of this improved practice are having demonstrable impact, others are less well established. For example, pupils are increasingly involved in assessing the quality of their own learning and that of their peers, but the impact on pupils' progress in all subjects is not fully evident in Key Stage 2. This is because school leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in monitoring how well staff deliver lessons in subjects other than English and mathematics. Senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning in English and mathematics has contributed well to the rapid improvement in attainment and progress in these subjects. It has also accurately informed school self-evaluation and provided opportunities to check whether previously identified areas for development have been successfully addressed.

Curriculum planning ensures that pupils have access to a broad and balanced programme with good links between subjects, and gives pupils extended chances to apply their skills to real-life situations. This engages pupils well, promotes their enthusiasm for learning, in and out of school, and makes good provision for developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. However, not all

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lessons feature a creative and imaginative approach, leading to some lessons not being as effective as the best. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including football, dance and athletics.

Parents and carers comment positively about the approachability of staff at all levels and value the openness of school leaders in listening to and addressing their suggestions and concerns.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

5 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Plympton St Maurice Primary School, Plymouth PL7 1UB

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently, particularly those of you who read to us or spoke to us about your work and what it is like to attend your school. Thank you, also, for responding to the questionnaire.

I am writing to tell you about the inspection.

- Your school is a good school. This is because pupils make good progress in lessons and treat each other well. You told us, and your parents and carers agreed, that the school is a happy place to be.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and pupils in both key stages make good progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- You told us that your teachers care about you. They have improved how well they assess your learning and plan lessons to make sure you make progress. They ask you challenging questions to help you learn. These things ensure teaching is good.
- You learn a lot and contribute to your school being a safe, happy and friendly place to learn. You told us that bullying is rare. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is good.
- The staff who lead your school have made sure that it has continued to improve since the last inspection.

We have asked the teachers and those who lead your school to:

- look at ways to make sure that all lessons are as good as the very best
- ensure all lessons have good pace and challenge and provide you with more opportunities for independent learning, for example through drama, art and information and communication technology.

You can all help by maintaining your highly positive learning attitudes and attendance.

Yours sincerely

Ronald Hall
Lead inspector

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