

Portsdown Primary and Early Years School

Sundridge Close, Cosham, Portsmouth, PO6 3JL

Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school benefits considerably from the very strong leadership of its headteacher and co-headteacher, and the very effective support provided by other senior leaders.
- Leaders and governors use the rigorous systems for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress very effectively. This ensures that planning to bring about improvements successfully targets weaker aspects.
- The school has improved well in all areas since its previous inspection. It is very well placed to improve further.
- Teaching is uniformly at least good. Pupils benefit from teaching staff who have an excellent awareness of where pupils are struggling and where they are doing well. Effective activities and support help pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Although many have weak literacy and numeracy skills on entry, their attainment is average by the time they leave. A higher proportion than is seen nationally reaches the levels expected for their age.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. British values, such as those of tolerance and the rule of law, are reinforced exceptionally well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils are very proud of their school, willingly taking on responsibilities to support its work.
- The excellent commitment of the school to caring for pupils is evident in the outstanding work it carries out to keep pupils safe and secure. Pupils know they are very safe in school and greatly enjoy being there. Attendance levels are above average.
- Children in the pre-school and Reception classes make good progress. The proportion reaching the levels expected for their age is rising well.
- Pupils who attend the special educational needs unit are well supported. Their achievement is good.
- Under the very strong leadership of its Chair, the governing body provides a good level of challenge and support. Governors are well informed about teaching quality and pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' ability to spell accurately is weaker than other writing skills. A few older pupils' phonic skills (reading the letter sounds in words) are weak.
- Pupils' ability in tackling complex investigations or solving problems, especially in mathematics, is not fully secure.
- Teaching is not yet consistently outstanding. Comments in teachers' marking do not always help pupils to improve. The level of challenge could be raised further for a small minority of pupils.
- Not all lessons provide activities that inspire pupils to do really well and make excellent progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. They also observed the work of the special educational needs unit and the pre-school class in the nursery. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to group or individual activities which help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up. They also heard a sample of pupils read and scrutinised a sample of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors visited some extra-curricular activities and the breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff including senior and middle managers, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to 18 parents bringing their children to school.
- Responses from the 54 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's records on current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to planning, monitoring and safeguarding were also looked at.

Inspection team

Diane Wilkinson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Graham Mabelson	Additional Inspector
Cliff Mainey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is school larger than the average-sized primary and early years school. In the primary school there are two classes in each year group.
- The school runs a three-class nursery for children from three months to four years of age. Most children attend this setting part-time. The local authority pre-school provision for the four-year-old children was inspected by this inspection team. Nursery provision for the younger children was inspected in February 2014.
- The school hosts a local authority 10-place development and assessment unit for pupils with a range of significant or complex and behavioural needs. This is overseen by the governing body. At the time of the inspection nine pupils were on roll.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of vulnerable pupils known to be eligible for additional funding is much higher than in most schools. This funding, known as the pupil premium, provides extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- There is a breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body and run by school staff.
- In partnership with a university, the school provides initial teacher training. Staff work closely with other local schools on monitoring and development work, including leading research work into educational innovations.
- There have been a number of changes amongst staff and governors since the previous inspection. At the time of the inspection a deputy headteacher was working as co-headteacher with the substantive headteacher.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - greater emphasis is placed on improving pupils' spelling skills in all year groups and on expecting pupils to spell accurately in all their work
 - the older, lower attaining and vulnerable pupils improve their phonic skills more quickly
 - pupils develop their skills in tackling investigative and problem-solving work, especially in mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning through:
 - further raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making sure all teachers consistently follow the guidelines for marking and provide helpful feedback to pupils so that they know how to improve
 - ensuring that more lessons provide activities that inspire pupils to make excellent gains in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's strong determination to provide the best for pupils is seen in the way the school has successfully tackled weaknesses and improved all areas of the school's work since its previous inspection. The headteacher and co-headteacher have ensured that pupils' behaviour is outstanding.
- Staff, governors and pupils wholeheartedly support her determination to bring about improvement. There is a clear recognition that still more needs to be done. Current weaknesses are already beginning to be successfully tackled and the school continues to improve well.
- Senior leaders, including the co-headteacher, provide very strong support for the headteacher, particularly in improving the teaching of literacy and numeracy, which are now uniformly at least good. Equally, they train new subject leaders to support checking and development work well. Leadership of the early years and the special educational needs unit is especially good.
- Leaders' and governors' checking of the impact that teaching quality has on pupils' progress is ongoing and very effective. All teachers are aware of what they need to do to speed up pupils' progress and they address this matter well. Formal performance management procedures and training opportunities increase teachers' expertise effectively.
- There is a strong commitment to providing equality of opportunity, including for pupils with special educational needs and vulnerable pupils. The school is successful in helping them to make up ground on their peers. Leaders, rightly, have now turned their attention to raising the proportion of pupils exceeding the levels expected for their age.
- The very effectively adapted curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests well. Activities are especially good at enthusing pupils and encouraging them to work hard. The 'Magic Fridays,' where pupils learn about, for example, circus skills, are extremely popular.
- Special literacy and numeracy activities to help pupils catch up, if they are at risk of falling behind, are very effective.
- Assessment systems are adapted effectively to meet new government requirements. Where they are well established, for example in the 'writing toolkits,' they support learning very well. Others are relatively new and have not had sufficient time to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
- The school fosters good relationships and tackles discrimination exceptionally well. This is demonstrated in the excellent way in which British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted. The atmosphere of reflection in assemblies is exemplary. Pupils' understanding of, and respect for, differences in modern British society are outstanding.
- Most parents are highly appreciative of the school and feel well informed about its work. This is evident from the responses of those spoken to by inspectors or who returned the school's recent parent questionnaire. A few who completed the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, felt the school did not respond well to their concerns. However, inspection evidence does not support this view.
- The attention given to the well-being of pupils and early years children is exemplary. Rigorous safeguarding arrangements fully comply with government requirements. The work undertaken for pupils who might be at risk, for example through the checks on and support for attendance, is outstanding. Policies and procedures, including those for child protection and the vetting of staff, are of high quality.
- The sport funding grant is allocated well to ensure pupils benefit from expert teaching in a range of activities. Pupils' enthusiasm for, and participation in, sport have increased as a result.
- The local authority supports and holds the school to account well. Local authority courses help enhance the quality of education and leadership. Training to improve the effectiveness of subject leaders is very effective. Local authority officers know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are rightly confident that Portsdown will need only light touch checks and support in the future.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is a very effective leader. Under her guidance the effectiveness of governance has improved very well. Governors hold the school to account well and support its work effectively. They are fully involved in checking how well teaching supports pupils' learning. The joint checks governors undertake with school leaders are very good. Governors are very knowledgeable about pupils' achievement data and this, together with their first-hand checks, ensures they have a very accurate picture of the school's effectiveness. Governors' involvement in the formal performance management of staff is very good. They are well placed to only agree salary increases for good performance. Governors' oversight in the allocation of, and checks on, the use of additional funding to support vulnerable pupils is strong. The governors rightly agree funding to support academic and social or emotional needs where it is necessary, for example through the highly successful breakfast club. This

ensures the extra support is increasingly effective and helps pupils close the gap on their peers well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school has been highly successful in helping early years children and older pupils to recognise that good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are key to their success in the future. Pupils develop a real thirst for learning; they consistently work hard in lessons and want their teachers to challenge them even further. In this aspect they are especially well-prepared for secondary school.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and very much enjoy being there. They get on exceptionally well with adults and each other. Attendance levels are high.
- With the agreement of the local authority, the school rarely excludes any pupils and has not done so for a number of years. Rather, it uses its own intervention strategies for those pupils who need time out from mainstream classes. This is highly successful. Parents are full of praise for this approach and the way the school works with them to resolve problems. Pupils who have been excluded from other schools are successfully re-integrated at Portsdown.
- The behaviour of those pupils for whom good behaviour is difficult improves exceptionally well over time. This is most notable in the special unit where some pupils have significant behavioural needs.
- Around the school, in assemblies, at lunch times and in the playground, behaviour is exemplary. Lessons are rarely interrupted, even by low-level disruption.
- Pupils are very mature and thoughtful youngsters who consistently look out for one another and fully recognise the importance of adopting British values such as tolerance and respect. They willingly take on responsibilities, for example as librarians, school councillors or showing visitors, including inspectors, around the school. They carry out these duties very well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- This is a school that provides high quality care for pupils and their families. Parents are full of praise for this aspect of the school's work, particularly the support given when there is a significant need.
- The work of a special team to support pupils' welfare is excellent and helps to keep all pupils safe, including those in the special unit, and free from harm.
- The exceptionally well run breakfast club gives those pupils who attend an excellent start to the school day. Parents and pupils clearly recognise its strengths and it is very popular.
- Pupils are very well informed about how to keep safe, for example when using the internet and what constitutes extremist behaviour. They know all about the different forms that bullying can take, say that it is rare in this school and is always dealt with swiftly and successfully.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching and learning have improved well since the previous inspection and are consistently at least good. Excellent support in place for staff new to the school or at the beginning of their teaching career, means they swiftly become effective at supporting Portsdown pupils' learning.
- A strong feature of teaching is the way staff encourage pupils to work hard and do their best. Lesson activities are planned well to support the learning of pupils working at different stages.
- Some staff are very good at recognising exactly how to inspire pupils to work at the maximum level and make excellent gains in their learning, but this only happens in a small minority of lessons.
- Lessons are well structured so, for example, pupils reinforce their skills well and build effectively on past learning. Teachers and classroom assistants are skilled at explaining or demonstrating new learning. Pupils are clear what is expected of them and what will make their work successful.
- Throughout lessons, teachers and classroom assistants are vigilant as to how well pupils are learning. They intervene swiftly to correct errors and raise the level of challenge when pupils have learnt quickly.
- Assessment information is used very effectively during lessons, for example, by making sure pupils constantly refer to the 'writing toolkit' which helps them to check whether they are on track to achieve the targets set for them.
- The school has a very effective marking scheme which is used well by most staff, although there is some variation in how effectively it is used. In some classes it is exceptionally good, providing very good advice

to help pupils improve. In a small minority of classes, teachers' comments do not help pupils to improve.

- Activities which are delivered in groups or individually, for vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs, including those in the special unit, are very good. The support for their learning during class lessons is good.
- Staff work hard to ensure that the most able pupils in the school learn well. Their progress has improved and their achievement is good. As pupils learn increasingly well, it is clear that teachers' expectations of a small minority could be raised. This is a current improvement focus for the school. It is starting to have a positive effect, as was seen in a very challenging Year 6 mathematics task,. However, in the past there was insufficient attention given to helping these pupils apply their good skills in different contexts, including in problem solving and investigative work. This limits their attainment.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children in the pre-school and Reception classes make good progress. As a result, despite having limited skills when they enter the pre-school, the majority of children reach a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. In previous years, children's attainment at the end of Reception was not as good, so pupils currently in the older year groups have further to go to reach the levels expected for their age.
- In Years 1 to 6, progress has improved well since the previous inspection and continues to speed up. Pupils achieve well. Despite many having weak literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the school, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average by Year 6.
- The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching age-related expectations for reading, writing and mathematics is better than in most schools. This is a testament to the school's hard work to ensure that all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are well-prepared for the future.
- Phonics is taught very well in early years, Year 1 and Year 2. The skills of lower attaining pupils' in this aspect are very secure. Standards are above the national expectations in the Year 1 phonic check. The comprehension skills of a small minority of pupils are not quite as good so that, by Year 2, attainment in reading is broadly average.
- Older pupils' comprehension skills develop exceptionally well and are very effective. However, too little attention is paid to addressing the gaps in phonic knowledge of the lower attaining and vulnerable older pupils, which limits their attainment. Overall, attainment in reading has improved well over the last year and is now broadly average.
- A strong emphasis on communication skills and oral language development in the pre-school and younger year groups has a very positive effect on pupils' grammar, sentence structure and use of vocabulary. By Year 2, most pupils write neatly and use interesting vocabulary in their stories or reports. However, in all year groups, spelling is weak. This limited Year 6 pupils' attainment in English grammar, spelling and punctuation last year, which was below average. Other writing skills are much better.
- Year 6 pupils write effectively in a range of genres; their fictional writing uses good vocabulary to enliven their work. Pupils' stories engage the reader and flow well. Pupils use these skills to good effect in other subjects, such as science when writing about the solar system or in history when describing the effect of the First World War.
- In mathematics pupils develop a very secure understanding of place value and calculation skills. By Year 6 they work confidently with different measures and data and have a very good awareness of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.
- Pupils tackle structured mathematical word problems set by their teachers confidently. They are however less skilled at solving problems independently, without support from adults.. This limits pupils' attainment, including that of the most able pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including pupils in the special unit and those in the pre-school, achieve well. In almost all cases they reach average attainment levels by Year 6.
- The school supports the progress of vulnerable pupils in all year groups well and their achievement is good. They have closed the attainment gap with their peers, both in school and nationally in writing and mathematics but not in reading where they are a term and a half behind. This is because their phonic skills are weaker, although their understanding of what they read is excellent.
- The small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. The achievement of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good.
- Despite the fact that virtually no children starting school exhibit skills above those typically expected for their age, good progress helps those pupils who learn quickly to reach standards above those expected for their age. This ensures the most able pupils achieve well.
- The proportion of pupils attaining above average standards is improving. However, this is limited by the

fact that staff do not always capitalise enough on pupils' great thirst for learning. Pupils themselves aspire to reach above average standards and a few told inspectors they know they could be challenged further; the inspectors agree.

The early years provision is good

- The school has built well on the good teaching and learning seen at the previous inspection. Children's achievement is good and improving well. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception in all areas of learning has risen.
- Teaching is uniformly at least good and the planned activities meet children's needs and interests especially well. The role of the key worker (the lead staff member for checking on and supporting individual children's progress) has improved considerably over the last two terms.
- Pre-school staff rightly emphasise the importance of promoting children's communication and language skills and personal, social and emotional development which, when they start school, is weaker for the large majority of children. Children make increasingly good gains in these aspects during their time in the pre-school. The learning observed during the inspection was outstanding.
- The excellent promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps ensure their personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Pre-school children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. The children sustain interest and are very keen to find out new things. These strengths support their learning exceptionally well and are very well-developed during the Reception year so children become confident learners.
- In the pre-school and Reception classes, communication and language and early literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well. Pre-school children greatly enjoy stories, 'guessing' what might happen next and recognising sounds in the words. Reception staff teach phonics very well so, by the end of the year, most children read the combination of different letters accurately.
- Writing readiness is encouraged in the pre-school through a wealth of opportunities for drawing different patterns. This strong emphasis on letter and number formation in Reception helps children to achieve well and write correctly in sentences, although a small minority still reverse the characters.
- Counting and measuring activities, for example in the 'shoe shop', help pre-school children recognise and count numbers up to 10, sometimes beyond. They also recognise the concepts of 'bigger' or 'smaller' than. Reception staff build well on this to help children count to 20, do simple calculations and measure accurately.
- In both year groups, children have a wealth of opportunities to gain an understanding of the world and learn expressive arts, such as role play and singing, and improve their physical development. In these areas they achieve well.
- As in the rest of the school, the attention given to children's well-being and safety is outstanding. They are exceptionally well looked after. Liaison with parents is very effective.
- The early years leader provides exceptionally strong support. Having very successfully improved weaker aspects in the pre-school over the past year, this term she is rightly focusing on ensuring teaching and learning in Reception improve as effectively.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116258
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	449006

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqueline Coonie
Headteacher	Irene Baldry
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 December 2012
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