

Poulner Infant School

North Poulner Road, Ringwood, Hampshire, BH24 3LA

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- This good and improving school is led effectively by a strong new headteacher and senior leadership team.
- The school's governors know the school well and do not hesitate to challenge the school to reach the highest standards.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there are plans in place to improve the school further.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils.
- The staff are very supportive of the school and are proud to work there.
- Teaching is good and getting better because the quality of teaching is closely monitored by senior leaders, and support given to teachers where required. The staff work well together and share ideas to make sure their teaching is effective.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Pupils quickly acquire the skills they need to be accurate, fluent readers who are enthusiastic about books and stories.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are exceptionally keen to learn and settle quickly to their work. Even the youngest children listen attentively and join in activities enthusiastically.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school because all adults take their safeguarding duties very seriously, and the systems the school has in place to keep pupils safe are exemplary.
- Decisive action taken by the school has resulted in an improvement in attendance rates: these are now higher than the national average.
- The school ensures that pupils are well prepared with the skills and knowledge they need to make a successful transition to the junior school.
- Children in the Reception class settle quickly and make rapid progress. They enjoy the activities which are well planned to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Over time pupils' attainment and progress have not been assessed accurately enough.
- Subject leaders are not playing a full part in supporting colleagues to improve teaching and assessment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, of which five were joint observations with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors met groups of pupils and talked to them about their work, about behaviour and safety and about their enjoyment of learning. Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books. One inspector toured the school with a group of pupils.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes were observed, as was pupils' behaviour during assembly and when moving around the school. Both inspectors visited classrooms to look at attitudes and behaviour in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the senior leadership team, with subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including those relating to safeguarding arrangements, policies, records relating to behaviour and attendance and the school's own self-evaluation.
- The inspectors took account of 106 responses to the Parent View survey, and had informal discussions with 11 parents in the playground before school. They also took account of the 35 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Janet Maul, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Laurie Lewin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Poulner Infant School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There are eight classes, three Reception classes and five classes of mixed Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. For part of the time pupils are taught in ability groups.
- Most children join the Reception class full time in the autumn term before their fifth birthday. A minority of parents choose to send their children for mornings only for the first half term.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with a very small minority coming from a range of other ethnic groups or speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium, additional government funding provided to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- Both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have recently been appointed to their posts.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school's assessment and monitoring systems are used effectively to improve pupils' learning by:
 - developing teachers' understanding of progress and attainment so they can assess pupils' work accurately
 - refining the school's tracking systems so that targets set for pupils have greater precision
 - using the information gained from assessments to match closely the work to pupils' needs.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they contribute to school improvement by:
 - making sure they fully understand the school's data and can use this knowledge to support colleagues to make accurate judgements about pupils' attainment and progress
 - increasing their responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and supporting colleagues to develop best practice.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by a strong and effective headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher. Both leaders were formally appointed in January 2015, but had in practice been performing these roles since the previous summer.
- The new senior leadership team know the school well and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas of relative weakness. As a result, they have well-targeted plans in place to improve the school further.
- Regular lesson observations by the senior leadership team have contributed to improving teaching or maintaining previous high performance. These observations contribute to the performance management process during which appropriate challenging targets are set for teachers. There is a close link between pay and performance.
- Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well organised and is helping pupils to make good progress. Parents have expressed appreciation for the way the school works with them and involves them in decision making.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. However, this is an area for development as they are not yet taking responsibility for checking the quality of teaching in their areas of expertise, and they are only now starting to support colleagues to further improve their practice.
- Over time, assessments have not always been accurate, with subject leaders and teachers being overcautious in their judgements and under-assessing pupils. The new senior leaders have started to address this, but the changes have recently been made, and are only now starting to be seen in the school's data. Evidence seen by the inspection team supports the leaders' views on assessment.
- The school follows the National Curriculum, but arranges the curriculum into topics where possible. These topics are well planned to excite and motivate pupils, as was seen by pupils' enthusiastic attitude to learning. Pupils spoke with excitement about the range of visits and visitors they have had; for example, they greatly appreciated a visit from the Fire Brigade during their 'Fire Fire!' topic.
- Leaders and teachers are passionate about giving pupils a wide education. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well planned. Pupils learn to have respect for different faiths and cultures; for example, through studying Hinduism and linking this to a visit from some Indian dancers, and participating in 'Africa Week'. Pupils learn about their own culture by studying British history and British institutions like the emergency services. Excellent social and moral education is reflected in the outstanding behaviour seen around the school.
- British values are embedded throughout the school. Pupils learn about democracy and have regular opportunities to take part in voting. They told an inspector that it is a 'fair way to choose'. Pupils consider that there is no racism in school and that nobody was teased about their race or because they looked different. They were adamant about this with one pupil saying 'Think how I would feel if it were me', demonstrating considerable empathy. The school is making a good start to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well. For example, it ensures that the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are given extra support so that they can join in activities and access the curriculum. Families from different faith groups are encouraged to celebrate their home festivals, and if appropriate to share them with the school. The school organised a visit from a disabled athlete to show that everyone can overcome barriers to success. The school also ensures equality of opportunity for adults: new jobs are widely advertised, and all 35 staff who returned questionnaires indicated that the school makes good provision for their professional development.
- The school works well with parents who consider the school to be well led and the staff to be extremely approachable. Parents also have a high opinion of the support their children are given both academically and socially.
- The additional funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is spent well to support this small group of pupils; their progress is closely monitored and appropriate help given. The money is often used to pay for extra help so that pupils do not fall behind with their learning, but other examples include giving support with emotional difficulties, ensuring that pupils can take part in activities their families might not otherwise be able to afford, and working with parents who find it difficult to get their children to school regularly. The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school, but has supplied additional support and training when the school has requested it.
- Leaders ensure that all staff are trained in identifying pupils at risk of harm and they know who to go to if they have concerns. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory

requirements.

- The primary sports funding is used well to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to try new games and sports, to take part in competitive events, and to ensure that physical education is well resourced. The headteacher has ensured that the improvements are sustainable by ensuring staff learn from specialist sports coaches.
- At the time of the inspection the school's website did not contain all of the statutory information that the school is required to publish but the school's new senior leadership team is currently in the process of updating the website.

■ The governance of the school:

- The school's governing body is highly effective. Its members are knowledgeable and committed to the school. The governors know the school's strengths and areas for development, and they analyse the data to see how well the school is performing when compared to other schools. The governors receive regular reports from the headteacher about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement which they closely interrogate. Governors ensure that there is a link between pay and performance for all staff including the headteacher, and they are rigorous when making decisions about pay awards. The governors provide the headteacher with both support and challenge; for example, they challenge the headteacher by asking probing questioning and they have been supportive when the headteacher has had to tackle difficult issues with parents. Finances are well managed. All governors attend training regularly and designated governors have received training on special educational needs, safeguarding and safer recruitment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding and this has a very positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils in all classes and groups are exceptionally keen to learn and do their best; as a result, very high levels of engagement can be seen across the school.
- Pupils have to move from room to room to join their learning groups; they do this sensibly and settle quickly to their work, resulting in no time being lost.
- The staff are successful at developing pupils' confidence; as a result, pupils are willing to 'have a go' without fear of failure.
- Pupils, including the youngest children, understand the school's routines and quickly access the equipment they need and tidy away after activities.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and at playtimes groups of pupils are proud of being chosen to do jobs. For example, one group were playground buddies who look out for pupils who are sad or on their own in order to play with them, while another group were busy searching for litter to collect with their pick-up sticks.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and told the inspectors that they work hard and are learning lots of new things. They think that grown-ups always encourage them to do their best. All the pupils spoken to thoroughly enjoy school, and this view was supported by the inspectors' observations.
- Pupils' behaviour at lunchtime is excellent. Lunchtime staff set a good example of polite, friendly behaviour with the result that the pupils are also polite and friendly. Pupils' manners are very good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school has highly effective systems in place to check that people who work with pupils are suitable to do so. Staff and governors are trained in safeguarding and understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe. They spoke very sensibly about road safety and 'stranger danger'. They have also learnt about e-safety and told the inspector how important it is not to put information about themselves online, and that if they were asked for this, or were worried in any way, to tell a grown up.
- The site is safe and very well maintained.
- Due to concerted action taken by the school, attendance has improved and is now higher than the national average. The school has rigorous procedures for following up unexplained absences. There have been no exclusions from the school in recent years.
- Pupils know what bullying is, but they think that such incidents are very rare and are confident that should they occur they would be properly dealt with. The school has effective systems in place for recording and dealing with any behavioural, racist or bullying incidents.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching over time is good, and as a result all groups of pupils achieve well. The school has a strong team of enthusiastic teachers and teaching assistants. Their positive attitudes encourage pupils to do their best.
- The school assesses the children's progress and ensures they are given work which is closely matched to their next steps in learning.
- If pupils' progress slows they are given additional support, either individually or in small groups, to enable them to catch up.
- The most able pupils benefit from work that is closely tailored to their stage of learning and they work at a fast pace. These pupils benefit from working with a local secondary school to take part in additional challenges.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given the support they need to enable them to make good progress from their different starting points.
- The teaching of reading is a particular strength of the school. Phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught systematically and well, and is targeted closely to pupils' stage of reading development. Pupils have opportunities to read regularly with an adult and to change their books. This is partly due to the high quality support given by dedicated volunteers.
- Handwriting is also systematically taught throughout the school, with the result that work is well presented and handwriting is of a high standard.
- Mathematics is well taught, with pupils doing lots of practical work to develop their learning. The inspectors also saw lots of 'maths talk' with opportunities for pupils to explain their reasoning. In one class a pupil was challenged to explain whether it was possible to have a 'times table' with only odd numbers: a challenge he rose to extremely well.
- Teachers make links across subjects whenever possible. A good example of this was seen in the fire safety posters displayed in the school, where pupils had used their computing skills to write fire safety messages and import pictures to put this important message across to their fellow pupils.
- The school has adopted a set of 'animal learning heroes' which staff use effectively to teach good learning behaviours such as perseverance. This enables pupils to discuss how they are learning as well as what they are learning.
- Pupils enjoy having individual target passports, but the targets are very broad, resulting in pupils not being able to use them to identify their next steps in learning as originally envisaged by the school's leadership team: this limits their value as a learning tool.
- In the recent past not all teachers had a good understanding of what constitutes good attainment and progress and they were often overcautious in their judgements. This resulted in the school's leaders not having a sufficiently accurate picture of the standards reached. This is currently being addressed by the new senior leadership team, but is not yet fully embedded throughout the school.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Most children join the school with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They make good progress and by the time they leave the Reception class more children are achieving at least the expected level of development in nearly all of the areas of learning (including reading, numbers, and shape, space and measures) than the national average. The proportion reaching the expected level for writing is the same as the national average.
- The inspectors saw children in the Reception class making good progress with learning social skills. They can take turns, share toys and listen to each other and adults. This was evident as they displayed excellent listening skills during a whole-school assembly.
- By the end of Year 1 a greater proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check than is found nationally.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and by the time they leave the school they are working at a level above that found nationally. There was a slight 'dip' in 2014; however, pupils still performed on average as well as other pupils nationally.
- In the 2014 assessments, the proportion of the most able pupils achieving the highest levels in the end of the Key Stage assessments was slightly lower than those found nationally in reading and mathematics. In writing, the proportion achieving the highest level was similar to the national figure. The school's leadership feels that teachers were somewhat overcautious in their assessments and this view is supported by the work scrutiny undertaken by the inspection team.
- The predictions made by the school for the 2015 assessments indicate that the standards being reached

by the current Year 2 pupils have returned to the previous high levels reached in 2013. This view is supported by the evidence obtained by inspectors during lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. They found that the current Year 2 pupils are working at a high standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The most able pupils are given work which challenges them and accelerates their learning. They are working at a high standard and evidence seen during the inspection supports the school's view that the proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics will be higher than the national average in 2015.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are quickly identified and they receive well-targeted support and encouragement. They make good progress from their different starting points.
- Last year the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups performed better than similar pupils nationally in reading and writing, but not so well in mathematics. The pupils in school now are making good progress, with nearly all achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- Disadvantaged pupils attained a lower standard than other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally in the 2014 tests. However, the performance of disadvantaged pupils is improving and they are steadily closing the gap in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils who are currently in school are making good progress and working at higher levels than previous years.
- Reading is of a particularly high standard throughout the school.

The early years provision

is good

- Arrangements for children to settle into the Reception class are good. Parents appreciate the opportunities to visit the school before their children start, and consider that communication between school and home is good. Parents particularly like being able to share information about their child's achievement online, and the Reception class staff update this information regularly.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is good. Adults have high expectations of children's learning and behaviour, and they plan interesting and challenging activities to develop the children's skills and knowledge. Some of the activities are initiated by the children while others are led by adults.
- During one of the activities chosen by children the inspectors saw children concentrating hard while cutting and sticking pictures of planets. In addition to developing the skilful use of scissors and glue, children were counting the planets and discussing which was the biggest and smallest with encouragement from an adult.
- During adult-led activities the children's concentration skills are impressive and their behaviour impeccable. For example, children were totally absorbed and engaged in their phonics learning, and excellent behaviour was seen as children enjoyed 'visiting the moon' during a physical education lesson.
- Very young children were seen solving subtraction problems by drawing figures on their small whiteboards and crossing them off. They were discussing their work and developing a sound idea of what subtraction means in real-life situations.
- Children who join the school at a level below what is typical for their age quickly have their needs identified and are given good support to enable them to catch up.
- Leadership of the early years provision is good, with children rapidly acquiring skills and knowledge due to good teaching and the high expectations of adults. This was particularly evident in the high level of phonics work the children were doing, when they showed that they could match letter sounds and names and most children were able to write the letters without help. The curriculum is well planned and has depth and breadth across the seven areas of learning, and builds upon what the children already know.
- Leadership is not outstanding because until recently the assessment of children's skills and knowledge was not accurate, with the staff being too cautious in their judgements. Changes to assessment practices have now been made, but have not had time to become secure.
- Children's behaviour in Reception is outstanding, just as it is in the rest of the school. This is due to the high expectations of the adults and the good example set by the older pupils. Children are taught to share, take turns, listen to each other and be polite, and this has been highly successful in supporting their learning.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children in the early years are also outstanding as they follow the same systems as the rest of the school.
- Children are well prepared for the next stage in their education in Key Stage 1.

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	116031
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	449750

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Heron
Headteacher	Jo Conner
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 September 2009
Telephone number	01425 472338
Email address	adminoffice@poulner-inf.hants.sch.uk

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