



Portobello Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108336
LEA Gateshead
Inspection number 277949
Inspection dates 14 November 2005 to 15 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Andrea Lyons

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Tamerton Drive
School category	Community		Birtley
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Chester le Street, County Durham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4104571
Number on roll	195	Fax number	0191 4104571
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Dorothy McGuiness
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2000	Headteacher	Ms Angela Charlton

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 14 November 2005 - 15 November 2005	Inspection number 277949
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Portobello Primary School is an average sized one form entry Community school. It is situated in a socially advantaged estate in the Birtley area of Gateshead. It is a popular school, with more than half of the current pupils coming from outside the designated catchment area. It is broadly similar to the majority of schools nationally, in terms of characteristics such as the number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. The school has a very small proportion of children who are looked after. The school is very stable, with few children entering or leaving at other than the usual times. The majority of the staff have worked at the school for a number of years. The headteacher was appointed two years ago.

The school has recently undergone major building works, extending and refurbishing the Key Stage 1 area, library and information and communication technology (ICT) suite. This now provides a high quality learning environment. There have also been significant improvements to the outdoor play area. It has a good relationship with its parents, who are very supportive of the school. The parents of over half the pupils at the school responded to the inspection questionnaire, and their views were overwhelmingly positive.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good and the inspectors agree with this judgement. They also consider that the school has a very good capacity to continue to improve, along the lines it has already established.

Standards and achievement are above average overall. However, the school does not track progress or set targets for different groups as well as it could, and so pupils' progress could be even better than this.

The leadership and management of the school are good, and the headteacher's leadership has some outstanding features. She knows the school very well, and has a clear and ambitious vision for its continuing improvement. She has already demonstrated a capacity to develop key areas of the school, for example, in encouraging staff development and establishing a strong senior management team.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the provision made by the school. The school consults them and their children in all aspects of its work and acts on suggestions that are made. The personal development of pupils is good and their attendance is well above average. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding, as is the care, guidance and support offered to pupils. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are good.

The school has improved on many of the positive areas identified in the last inspection and has successfully addressed the small number of issues arising from that inspection. The development of multicultural education has been particularly successful. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the good progress made by most pupils is secured for all.
- Improve the quality of target setting for all pupils.
- Ensure that the recently introduced systems for involving pupils in the assessment of their own learning are applied effectively across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school judges that achievement and standards are good. The inspectors agree with this.

Children enter the school with attainment which is about or above average for their age. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school their results in the national tests are above average in all core subjects. The school has demonstrated high standards consistently for the last few years. It has shown particularly good achievement in different subjects during this time, for example, in science at Key Stage 2, but has also maintained a steady improvement in pupils' overall attainment.

Pupils' overall rate of progress is good. However, there are variations in the progress made by different groups of pupils or in different subjects. These differences do not form a consistent pattern, are not linked to particular children or subject areas, and individually would not be a cause for concern, but they do add up to reduce the overall rate of progress pupils make. Linked to this, the school has not set accurate and challenging targets. There is a pattern whereby the school does not meet or, alternatively, significantly exceeds its targets. This does not detract from the high standards overall, but it does show that it does not predict accurately the achievement of its pupils. The school is aware of this situation and has already taken positive action to improve it. In particular, specific support at the end of Key Stage 2 produced a significant rise in standards in the last national tests, where the number of children reaching the highest levels was significantly above the national average. Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own judgement that provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school is excellent. This helps them to concentrate and cooperate with each other in lessons and to make good progress in their learning. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 serve on the recently established school council. They have a very clear understanding that this helps them to make their school better and to represent the views of their classmates. Their membership is a source of pride to them. Pupils are also being encouraged to act as buddies and they understand that this will help them to enjoy school even further. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles. They drink water during lessons and support the fruit tuck shop, which they themselves organise at break times. Attendance is outstanding.

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of the rules which apply in their class and around the school, and these are regularly reinforced by their teachers. The school is helping pupils to become more involved in their own work so that they can understand what they need to do to improve their learning. In Year 6, pupils mark each other's work and give each other suggestions for improvement. They enjoy the responsibility and the challenge of this process.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school considers the quality of teaching to be good. Inspectors agree with this judgement.

In all lessons inspected, teaching was at least satisfactory, and in over two thirds of lessons the teaching was good or better. All lessons were planned well, and provided varied activities for pupils of different ability. Where the teaching was good, teachers not only planned well but used skilful questioning to help children learn actively and to check that children fully understood the lesson. They used imaginative means to embed and extend learning effectively, and linked work across different subjects to help children remember and make connections between their lessons. Where the teaching was less good, teachers sometimes were so keen to reach very high standards that they pushed through new ideas without checking that children really had understood and applied them. In some lessons, there was a tendency for teachers to explain too much and not allow pupils to undertake enough activity. On these occasions, pupils understandably became a little restive, but good discipline and pupils' good personal development meant that teachers could resolve this potential problem very quickly.

The school has introduced a valuable new assessment system, which is designed to enable children to see very clearly the steps they need to take to improve. However, use of this across the school is still too variable and it is not yet having the effect on pupils' progress that was intended. Although teachers know their pupils very well individually, the lack of a clear tracking mechanism closely linked to individual and group target setting also means that teachers are not easily able to identify groups of children who may be underachieving. This means that progress over the longer term is too variable across the school and across different subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress. This is a strength of the school. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants whose work contributes well to the progress children make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum for pupils of all ages. This judgement agrees with the school's own assessment. The curriculum is broad and balanced and ensures that pupils' personal, social and health education is well promoted. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Year 6 pupils are about to undertake a residential visit and there is a very wide range of after-school sports activities. Older pupils experience lessons in French. The recent improvements to the outdoor play areas have already begun to support the wider curriculum, with some lesson activities taking place in them, and children using them to stage plays at lunchtime.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Their needs are precisely analysed and careful planning within lessons and expert teaching for them on an individual basis supports their learning.

The school has excellent links with the local high school which enables the pupils to move successfully to the next stage of their education. The last inspection identified multicultural education as a key issue for the school to consider. It has now successfully developed an interesting multicultural curriculum which enriches pupils' experience

across all subjects. For example, last half term pupils took part in a 'World Week' in which they performed dances from various countries alongside professional dancers.

The school is in the early stages of developing links which can be made across all subjects to provide a more flexible and creative way of teaching the curriculum. This is an appropriate and positive development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school considers that it makes outstanding provision for the care, guidance and support of its pupils and it is right to make this judgement. Procedures for health and safety, risk assessment and child protection are thorough. Pupils learn in a safe and secure environment. In a recent survey of pupils' views, they say overwhelmingly that they feel safe at school. Throughout the inspection, pupils told inspectors that they feel valued and supported. Parents' surveys are also very positive, in particular about the support being offered to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the high level of care, welcome and support they feel all pupils and parents receive from the staff. The teacher from the high school with responsibility for transition ensures that pupils are fully supported both academically and socially during this potentially challenging time of their lives. Support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. Careful programmes are devised to help them with their work and parents are fully involved in this process.

The school is making further improvements to its systems for assessing how well pupils are doing. Their work is very carefully marked so as to tell them how to improve. However, this process has yet to become consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school judges the leadership and management of the school to be good, and the inspectors agree with this judgement. The headteacher's leadership has aspects which are outstanding.

She has a vibrant and dynamic vision for the school and is extremely committed to its continuing improvement. She has an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development, and is supported by a committed staff team who are increasingly developing their skills through additional training or participation in the school's management team. There is a real sense of purpose and excitement about the school, reflected in the excellent displays around the school and the high quality learning environment both inside the new buildings and in the imaginative outside play areas.

Since her appointment to the school two years ago, the headteacher has successfully developed a shared approach to the management of the school, and this is shown in staff's enthusiasm for school improvement issues such as curriculum development. The school is also developing opportunities to share practice with a number of schools and a teacher training establishment. This helps the school to evaluate its own approach

and also brings in new ideas. The school rightly prides itself on its open and welcoming ethos which, for example, encourages members of the governing body to be in school as much as possible, and actively seeks the views of parents, pupils and other partners such as the local secondary school.

The school's self-evaluation is very good, as is the school improvement plan, and the school has made good progress since the last inspection. Together with the strong staff and management team, this demonstrates a very good capacity to continue to improve the school in the next few years.

Some areas of development, although exactly matched to the school's needs, have not yet come to fruition because of unavoidable staff absence and the demands of managing the building works. In particular, work has been delayed on developing a more focused mechanism for managing performance data and target setting, and so has work on Assessment for Learning.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Portobello Primary School

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16 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. You really made us feel welcome, and you were very polite and interesting to talk to.

Here are the things that we liked best about your school

How well you all behave in your lessons, around the school and in the playground; and how polite and considerate you are.

What good relationships you have with each other and the adults in your school.

The way that you keep healthy by eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise.

The way that you are involved in helping run your school through the school council, circle time, and the new buddies system.

How interested you are in your work, how hard you work, and what good standards you achieve.

Your beautiful art work and displays of written work around the school.

What we have asked Ms Charlton and all the teachers to do now

Look very carefully at how well you learnt through the year and help you make even better progress as you move through the school.

Use how well they know you to set the right targets for your classes.

Make sure that everyone carries on using the new way of marking your work in pink and green.

Please thank your parents for us, for sending back so many of the questionnaires. They were all very happy with the school. We think that your school is a good school, and will carry on to be even better. You should be very proud of yourselves and you should be very proud of your school

Best wishes

Andrea Lyons HMI, Mick McCabe AI

Lead inspector and team inspector

PS: We were 'tickled pink'!

Annex B