



Prettygate Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114743
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279440
Inspection dates 3 October 2005 to 4 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Marina Gough LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Plume Avenue
School category	Community		CO3 4PH
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01206577608
Number on roll	253	Fax number	01206766098
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Gaye Edwards
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Barry Hawes

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three additional inspectors who were in school over a period of two days.

Description of the school

Prettygate Junior School caters for 252 pupils between the ages of seven and eleven, most of who come from the local area. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are mixed, but broadly average. The school has small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and for whom English is not their main spoken language. Over the past few years the school has been awarded a number of national awards in recognition of the outstanding provision it makes across a range of areas. The school's pioneering work in information and communication technology has led to much recognition from the world of business. The attainment of pupils starting at the school is now broadly average. In past years the attainment on entry has been slightly higher than this with more pupils working at higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that has many strengths. The inspection findings fully reflect the school's own very accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and show that the school is in a very strong position to bring about further and continued improvement. There are very high levels of parental satisfaction and pupils think the school is 'great'. By the time pupils leave school, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. However, although standards in mathematics are high, pupils are not always fast enough when making mental calculations. The provision for information and communication technology is a significant strength of the school, and pupils attain exceptionally high standards. Pupils of all ages and abilities make very good progress and take great pleasure in their learning. Teaching is outstanding overall. It is best in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The pupils' behaviour is very good and pupils are friendly and polite. By the time they leave school, pupils are extremely mature in their approach to work, and tackle learning in a very enthusiastic and confident manner. The school provides a very caring and supportive learning environment where the pupils' safety, health and well-being are of paramount importance. The leadership and management of the school by the head teacher and senior staff are outstanding, and improvement since the last inspection has been very well paced and highly effective. The governing body is very supportive and discharges its duties well. Governors have started to make regular visits to find out about the school's work, but this is a relatively new initiative and not yet giving them a full picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

The school should continue with its plans to:- -help pupils to become faster in making mental mathematical calculations, especially when using multiplication facts; -increase the range and impact of monitoring by the governing body.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

In English, mathematics and science, the standards pupils attain are well above the national average, and have been maintained at this high level over the last few years. On average, children enter the school with the levels of skill and knowledge expected for their age. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, and higher attaining pupils, make very good progress from their starting points. Basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are very secure. In information and communication technology, the pupils make outstanding progress and by the time they leave school at the age of eleven, their attainment is exceptionally high. Pupils see information and communication technology as a 'tool for learning' and are very keen to talk about how they use computers, cameras and other technology to support their learning in

other areas of the curriculum. Staff are very skilled in the way in which they track the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils. They set challenging targets which the pupils themselves understand, and measure the pupils' progress on a regular basis so that any problems can be quickly resolved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils behave very well, are enthusiastic and have excellent relationships with all staff and with one another. As a result the school is a happy and caring place. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy accepting responsibility and helping others. The school council is very active and has a strong voice in the school. Some of the suggestions that have been put forward have led to improvements in provision, such as the recent playground development. Pupils were widely consulted before the 'Anywhere Anytime' information and communication technology learning project was implemented, and now thoroughly enjoy taking the laptop computers home. This is an example of the school's effective preparation of its pupils for their future as productive citizens who take responsibility in their community. The way in which the school promotes the pupils' health, safety and physical well-being is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food and to drink water throughout the day, and older pupils organise and manage the playtime tuck shop which sells a very good range of fruit. Pupils are keen to take part in the excellent range of additional sporting activities that are provided, and have a very good understanding of the impact of exercise on their bodies. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The pupils have very good social skills, and a very clear sense of right and wrong. The regular and long-standing links with a school in Uganda help to strengthen the pupils' understanding of other cultures. Pupils show high levels of respect for the beliefs and customs of others, and are very sensitive when sharing special moments with friends. Pupils of all ages are keen to come to school and as a result, attendance is very high.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. In most lessons teachers expect the highest standards from the pupils, both in terms of their work, and their behaviour. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, matching work very well to the differing needs of pupils and ensuring that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn. More able pupils are stretched very well with suitable challenges. Very good attention is given to ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties have work which enables them to work alongside their peers for the maximum amount of time. Teaching assistants are used well to work with pupils of all abilities, and in the main they have a very positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The quality of explanation and questioning is often excellent. In one Year 6 mathematics lesson, a superbly explained

process enabled the pupils to understand quickly how pattern problems in algebra linked with formulae in spreadsheets. Teachers' questioning is probing, enabling them to assess pupils' learning very well and to extend the more able pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well because of the very rigorous and thorough way in which they track the pupils' progress. They use assessment information very well when planning the next stage of pupils' learning, taking good account of what the pupils already know and can do. The pupils have many opportunities to comment on their own progress and talk easily and knowledgeably about their overall achievements and what they need to do next to improve their learning further. The teaching of basic skills is very good throughout the school, and teachers in all classes make outstanding use of information and communication technology to enliven teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The opportunities that pupils have for learning are outstanding. The pupils appreciate the very rich range of activities that the school provides, and the take up of extra-curricular activities is very good. The curriculum is very well knitted together so that there are many meaningful links between the different subjects, and many very good opportunities for pupils to practise newly learned skills. The provision for information and communication technology is one of the most outstanding features of the curriculum. The arts, including music and art and design have a very high profile within the school and pupils derive high levels of enjoyment from their work in these areas. The school makes very good provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is not their main home language. Because of the very good, unobtrusive and sensitive support that is provided, these pupils are able to take a full and active part in all activities. Pupils who are gifted and talented are encouraged to realise their potential fully in the areas in which they excel, and the school has some excellent links with other schools and agencies which very actively support these pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a very caring and supportive environment where pupils can grow into happy, confident individuals. Child protection arrangements are well established, and are fully understood by all staff. For individuals and groups of pupils who are experiencing difficulties, support is 'tailor-made' to their needs. For example, an art therapist works regularly with a small group of pupils to support their emotional and social development. The governing body plays an effective role in ensuring that the school is safe, and pupils receive very good guidance in terms of ensuring their own safety both in and out of school. Very good links with the main feeder infant school and the main receiving secondary schools ensure that the transition of pupils from one school to another is seamless and unthreatening.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher's excellent leadership is characterised by very well-paced change, extensive consultation with all those involved with the school, and high but achievable aspirations. The headteacher and staff have achieved an outstanding balance between academic rigour and ensuring that pupils are happy, confident and enthusiastic learners. This is a very inclusive school when pupils are highly valued as individuals, and their successes are celebrated and shared. The school has a very thorough and well thought-through programme for checking the quality of teaching and learning which has been instrumental in bringing about improvements. Although governors have made a good start in learning about the school's life and work, there is still more to be done to enable them to be fully informed about its strengths and weaknesses and to ask searching questions. The school manages and monitors its finances very well and the governing body has very good systems in place to measure the cost-effectiveness of major spending decisions. For example, the high levels of spending on information and communication technology hardware and software have been evaluated in terms of the gains in pupils' learning and the standards they attain. The capacity of the school to improve still further is outstanding. The school's ability to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses is excellent, and the inspection findings fully reflect the school's own judgements.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	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

Your school is excellent! It is very clear to us that your staff care for you very much and respect and value what you do. We were very pleased with the following:- - the way you like school, behave very well and work very hard - how you think very carefully about the work you have done and look at how you can do things better - the school also considers it very important to know what you think about life in school - that you do very well and make very good progress in English, mathematics and science - the really good opportunities that the school provides for you to use computers so that you can do exceptionally well in this aspect of your learning - how well Mr Hawes and his team of staff manage the school so that everyone is happy and keen to do their best. Your school has improved very well over the last five years. You have many more computers and an even better range of activities that helps you to understand the world around you and to become better citizens. However, there are a few small things that the school needs to do to make it even better:- -you need to know your times tables so that you can be faster in your work in mathematics - the school governors need to spend more time in school finding out about what you do. Finally, thank you very much for taking to the time to talk to the inspectors. You and the staff made us very welcome, and we found your comments very helpful.