



Plumberow Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115273
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279560
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Michael Milton LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hamilton Gardens
School category	Foundation		SS5 5BX
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 203741
Number on roll	565	Fax number	01702 201978
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Rob Stainsby
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Graham Tarte

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 3 May 2006 - 4 May 2006	Inspection number 279560
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Plumberow Primary School is a very large school. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and of those known to be eligible for free school meals are below average. The school has received the Sports Active Mark and awards from Healthy Schools and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school's view that it provides a good quality of education and good value for money. During the Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress and reach above average standards because of the effective teaching team and the stimulating, well planned curriculum. Since 2001, the standards attained by Year 6 pupils have been above national averages in English, mathematics and science. In 2005 the Year 6 pupils' progress was inadequate, as a significant minority of pupils did not make enough gains compared with when they were in Year 2. Since then the school has taken a number of important steps that have resulted in pupils making generally good progress during Key Stage 2. However, there are a few classes and subjects where pupils could achieve even more. Teaching and learning are good. The school has improved assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress, but these are not yet used consistently to improve pupils' learning. The pupils' personal development is outstanding, and they are extremely keen to work hard and do their best. The good curriculum is enriched in many ways. Provision for pupils' care and support is good. Parents are very pleased with the quality of care and education that the school provides. The children and staff enjoy being part of the school. Leadership and management are generally good. The school is in the process of improving the effectiveness of its middle managers. The school's self-evaluation is mainly accurate and has correctly identified the key priorities for improvement. However, aspects of monitoring and evaluation are insufficiently systematic. The school has successfully addressed all the issues for action identified at the last inspection and maintained many strengths. It has a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, by making more effective use of assessment information. - Continue to develop the roles of middle managers so that they are all effective in improving teaching and pupils' learning. - Continue to develop a more systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

During the Foundation Stage, pupils achieve well and, by the time they enter Key Stage 1, their standards are above the expected early learning goals. In 2005, pupils achieved well in Key Stage 1, but the achievement of the Year 6 pupils was inadequate because a significant minority of pupils did not make enough progress from their Year 2 standards. Since then, the school has made several important improvements, such as the setting of targets for individual pupils, which have resulted in improved levels of achievement. As a result, pupils make good progress and their achievement is now generally good in Key Stages 1 and 2, although there is scope for some pupils to achieve more. For example, Year 5 pupils do not develop their skills of scientific enquiry

as much as they should. In 2005, the standards of Year 2 pupils were above the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics, and the standards of Year 6 pupils were above the national averages for English, mathematics and science. These above average standards continue with the current pupils in Years 2 and 6. Throughout the school, pupils thoroughly enjoy their work. In 2005, the pupils just exceeded the reasonably challenging targets that the school had set. Boys and girls make good progress and achieve similar standards. Looked-after pupils and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress and achieve well, as do those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils' cultural awareness is very well developed through many aspects of the curriculum. Relationships are very good. During lessons, pupils work together in a mature way. Pupils of all ages readily consider each other's feelings. Despite the best efforts of the school, attendance has fallen slightly over the last three years and is now similar to the national average. This is largely the result of winter illness and because an increasing number of parents book family holidays in accordance with the holiday dates of the main receiving secondary school. Pupils greatly enjoy school. They are very proud of their school and very keen to work hard and do their best. Pupils of all ages behave exceptionally well and they make an outstanding contribution to the school community. For example, older pupils train as playtime 'Plumberow pals'. Fund-raising activities for a children's hospice are suggested and organised by pupils and music groups perform within the local community. Pupils adopt very healthy lifestyles and many take part in the extensive extra-curricular sporting activities and competitions. Pupils have a very good awareness of safety when, for example, using the swimming pool. Pupils' outstanding social skills, together with their strong basic skills in literacy and numeracy, equip them very well for their future life within the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Common strengths of much teaching include a variety of teaching methods that involve the pupils in their learning, the use of questions that make the pupils think, the effective use of teaching assistants to help pupils learn in all parts of lessons, and the use of activities that pupils enjoy. Pupils' work is marked frequently, although they do not always respond to teachers' comments. Aspects of teaching that are less effective in some lessons include learning objectives that are too general, marking that does not help pupils to understand how to improve, and tasks that are not well matched to pupils' learning needs. The school tracks the year-on-year progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This information

is used to help improve some aspects of pupils' progress; the school knows that more could be done with the information to help all pupils achieve consistently well. Pupils know their targets for improvement in English and mathematics, although there are some inconsistencies in the clarity of these targets and in the ways that teachers monitor pupils' progress towards them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum usually meets pupils' learning needs and helps to develop their keen interest in learning and their enjoyment of work. Occasionally, the curriculum does not provide pupils with the learning opportunities needed to make good progress, for example, in scientific enquiry. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are well provided for through a range of effective extra activities. Pupils with English as an additional language do well as the curriculum is adapted to meet their developing use of English. The outside learning area for children in the Foundation Stage is exceptionally well designed with a very good range of learning resources. Good links are made between subjects, for example, when Year 4 pupils work on the topic of 'Space'. Links with a neighbouring secondary school enhance the curriculum in several ways. The curriculum is enriched with a very good range of educational visits, knowledgeable visitors and clubs. These help pupils to gain a good appreciation of the arts and of environmental issues and to improve their creative and physical skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff work effectively to ensure pupils' health and safety. Teachers know their pupils very well and close links with external agencies ensure that pupils receive any specialist help and support they need. Thorough, well organised procedures for child protection and first aid ensure that pupils are safe and very well looked after. Routine health and safety checks are undertaken, and plans are in hand for the 'single risk assessment' to be completed. Pupils who are vulnerable and those with learning difficulties or disabilities receive effective support. Pupils often know how well they are getting on with their work, and those at risk of underachievement are usually identified and given additional help. Pupils usually have clear targets for improvement in English and mathematics and many say that these help them to learn.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good overall leadership and management have resulted in the outstanding personal development of pupils, and the good quality of teaching, learning, the curriculum and care of pupils. The headteacher's strong leadership is valued by parents and pupils. He has developed a staff team that is keen to raise standards further. The staff work hard to ensure that all pupils benefit from the education provided by the school. There are generally effective systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying

what it could do better. Parents and pupils are actively involved in this process. However, there are some inconsistencies in provision because monitoring and evaluation are not systematic enough, especially the arrangements to check teaching and learning. The school has recognised the need to improve this area of its work. As a result, one of the school's developments has been to start a programme to improve the effectiveness of middle managers. The improvements made to their work have already resulted in pupils making higher rates of progress. The school has developed productive working relationships with the local authority, neighbouring schools and with other external professionals. Governance is good. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and current areas for improvement. Financial management is effective, ensuring that school improvements are adequately financed. Because of the good work of the headteacher, staff and governors, and the steps taken to improve pupils' progress, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

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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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	1	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?	2	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	3	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

We really enjoyed meeting you and the staff when we visited your school. Thank you for welcoming us and being so polite and helpful. We learnt a lot about the school from you. For example, it was good to hear that you enjoy school and find your targets helpful for reading, writing and mathematics. Your parents are very happy with the school too. The staff give you lots of help to be healthy and stay safe, and lessons help you to learn new things. You behave really well and are very keen to learn, and this helps the teachers to teach you well. You have lots of opportunities to take part in sports, music and trips. Mr Tarte, the teachers and other adults all look after you well. Mr Tarte and the staff know what needs to be done to make your school even better. The main things to do are: - for you to carry on using the different levels, grades and comments about your work to help you learn even more - for the staff to make improvements to the way that the teaching and your work are checked to make sure that they are always really good. You can help with these improvements by continuing to behave well and work hard, and by thinking carefully about the things you can do to make your work even better.