



# Peartree Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117172  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280004  
**Inspection dates** 24 November 2005 to 25 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs. Helen Ranger LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Peartree Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		AL7 3XW
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 881033
<b>Number on roll</b>	147	<b>Fax number</b>	01707 881033
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. John Paull
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Sherie Hart

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 24 November 2005 - 25 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280004
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Peartree Primary is a smaller than average sized school. It serves a central area of Welwyn Garden City where most houses are owned by the local authority or housing associations. When children are admitted to the Reception class their attainment is often well below average. A high percentage of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is above average. Most pupils come from White British families. The rest, about a sixth of the total, come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. These pupils often do not speak English as their first language and about half of them are an early stage of learning English. An increasing number of pupils move in or out of the school at times other than the usual admission or transfer points.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's own judgement that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This is a school where standards are gradually rising. Good teaching in the Reception class means that children do well at the start of their time in school, although they are not quite reaching the levels expected nationally. Pupils in the rest of the school make adequate progress because teaching is satisfactory. By Year 6, standards are low compared to the levels expected nationally. They need to rise, particularly in English and mathematics, if pupils are to acquire the basic skills necessary for the rest of their education and for later life. This could be helped if teachers made better use in their lessons of the information they have on individual pupils' progress. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and is promoted well by effective arrangements for pastoral care and welfare. Attendance rates are low. Absence affects the progress of some pupils who do not take full advantage of what the school offers. The curriculum is satisfactory but does not make the best use of time in balancing the full range of subjects to ensure that pupils learn as efficiently as they could. The cultural and spiritual aspects of subjects are not always covered well. The headteacher and deputy head work well together and work closely with the governors, especially the experienced and active chair of governors. With support from the local authority's advisers, they are developing good plans to raise standards. Recent action to improve the school is starting to have a positive impact, although it has not yet had a full effect on the standards achieved by the older pupils. While the senior staff are identifying necessary improvements, the rest of the staff need to be better equipped to join them in deciding where action is needed most. There has been reasonable improvement since the last inspection and the school shows a sound capacity to make further progress. It manages its budget efficiently and gives satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the information gained from assessing pupils' progress is used to focus more clearly on what needs to be done to raise standards and improve teaching in English and mathematics.
- Improve the balance of the curriculum to make sure that enough time is spent on all subjects, including their relevant spiritual and cultural aspects.
- Improve the systems for school self-evaluation so that all the staff know how well the school is doing and what needs to be done to develop further.
- Continue to work with parents to improve attendance rates.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

From a much lower than average starting point when they join the school, the children in Reception make good progress. They often do not reach the levels that are expected nationally by the end of Reception because the starting points for many of them are so low. Achievement in the rest of the school is satisfactory. The school's performance in the national tests for 7 and 11-year-olds in recent years has been low but there are

signs of improvement. In 2005, the results of assessments in Year 2, while still below average, were better than in the previous three years. The general trend of results in Year 6 has been upwards over the past five years and performance has improved at a faster rate than nationally. To this extent, there has been sufficient improvement since the last inspection. However, results in literacy and numeracy were still considerably below average in 2005 and remain a key area for further improvement. The school sets challenging targets for the performance of its oldest pupils but last year these were not achieved. Standards in the current classes remain below average but the school's records show that pupils are making satisfactory progress. This includes those who have learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English. The impact of this improvement can be seen particularly in the younger age groups and is gradually moving up the school.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors consider pupils' personal development is satisfactory, although the school feels it is good. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy school and respond sensibly in lessons. There is a substantial minority of pupils who find it difficult to control themselves, and adults work hard to ensure that these pupils' behaviour is usually satisfactory. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. The provision for the pupils' social and moral development is good and, consequently, relationships between pupils and with adults are usually positive. There is some provision for the pupils' spiritual development through assemblies and links with local churches but not enough emphasis is given to religious education or spirituality across the curriculum. There is limited focus on the pupils' cultural development and on the development of an understanding of the diversity of cultures in society. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to make a contribution to the community, for example by raising money for charity. The school makes adequate provision for them to make their views heard through the school council, such as when suggesting ways of supporting those who need a friend at playtime. Pupils develop sound skills for their future well-being, though there are too few opportunities for them to take initiative in their own learning. They develop a satisfactory understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including the value of exercise and healthy foods. They are taught about how to stay safe when in school and outside. Attendance is below the national average in spite of the school's significant efforts to improve it.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory. It is often good in the Reception class, where the work is well designed to meet the needs of the children. Relationships are satisfactory throughout the school and discipline is usually effective. The teachers plan their work adequately and have a reasonable idea of what they want their pupils to learn. Introductions are

sometimes lively and skills are taught precisely, although there are occasions when the explanations are too long and the pupils have too little to do. Some interesting methods and resources are used and the teachers occasionally encourage the pupils to work independently, but this is not common. The activities are often set at different levels for the range of age and ability in the class. However, although the teachers keep assessments of their pupils' attainment and progress, these are not always used effectively to plan further work. Consequently, there are times when the activities do not build well enough on the pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, they do not always concentrate well enough, and occasionally behave inappropriately. The quality of marking is inconsistent; it sometimes shows the pupils how well they have done and how they can improve, but this is too rare. The teaching assistants make a positive contribution, but their time is not always used effectively during the beginning and end of lessons, when they often sit unoccupied.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

There has been good progress in improving the curriculum for the Reception class, which was a key issue at the time of the last inspection. In the rest of the school, while all subjects are taught, the curriculum is still not balanced well enough to ensure that the pupils receive a thorough grounding in all subjects. Insufficient time is devoted to some subjects, particularly religious education, and time is not always used efficiently enough to cover all that is needed. The school has rightly identified that standards in English are a priority, and has given additional time to the subject, but this has restricted further the time for other things. Provision for the pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. There is a sound range of activities outside school hours. The school promotes the pupils' understanding of healthy living soundly through its suitable programme of personal and social education.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. This is a caring school that successfully looks after the physical and mental well-being of its pupils. Suitable arrangements for child protection and health and safety are in place and understood by staff. There are good measures for discouraging aggressive behaviour. Pupils report that incidents of bullying sometimes occur, but most are confident these will be dealt with. They say that there is a trusted adult they can confide in. However, because the school does not make good enough use of information about the overall progress pupils make, the provision for their academic guidance and support is not fully effective.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school has moved forward satisfactorily since its last inspection. It judges its leadership and management to be good. However, inspectors consider they are

satisfactory at present because recent initiatives have not had the effect of raising standards more rapidly. The headteacher has dealt soundly with the challenges posed by staffing changes, which included a prolonged period when the school was without a permanent deputy head. The caring atmosphere and commitment to pupils' social and moral development have remained strengths throughout. There are now more focused plans to ensure that academic standards also rise. The school values all individuals and generally includes all pupils well in its work. The school maintains a sound partnership with parents, most of whom hold positive views of its provision. Systems for self-evaluation are developing gradually. Teachers are now more involved in checking the effectiveness of teaching, learning and the curriculum. They increasingly use the data available on pupils' progress to see where this can be improved. There is still a need for all the staff to be more rigorous in how they identify the main areas to be tackled next, and for governors to be even better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There are good plans to work more closely with the local authority to support current initiatives. The school shows a commitment to raising standards and is in a satisfactory position to continue to improve.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us to find out about it. This letter is to tell you about the most important things we saw. These are some of the best things - The adults care about each of you as individuals and try hard to make sure that you feel safe in school. - The children in the Reception class get a good start in your school. - Your teachers are making sure that you are getting on all right in literacy and numeracy. - Most of you enjoy school and get on with the people around you. - Projects like the school council make sure you have your say in what happens in school. These are things that can be made better - You need to improve your skills in English and mathematics even more and we want your teachers to keep working with you on this. - Some of you stay away from school sometimes when you are well enough to attend and do not benefit from what your school offers you. - Your teachers spend a lot of time checking what you can do and they need to use this information better to make sure your lessons help you to achieve even more. - We want the teachers to make sure that your timetables include time for all the subjects so that you can build up a wider range in your knowledge and skills. Make the most of your time at Peartree School.