

# Plaistow Hill Infants' School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113295
<b>Local Authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	289573
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Laurie Lewin

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	S Hurley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Hatherley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 March 2002
<b>School address</b>	Roman Way Higher St Budeaux Plymouth PL5 2DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 365410
<b>Fax number</b>	01752 351224

---

<b>Age group</b>	3-7
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 May 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	289573

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is an average-size school. Many of the pupils come from outside the immediate locality. Many of them come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Nearly all pupils are White British heritage; a very small number speak English as an additional language and need support in learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than that found in most other schools. The school has a nursery and when the children first start in this part of the school they show attainment that is below the levels expected for their age. During the academic year 2005/06, the headteacher was seconded to support a local primary school. The deputy headteacher, who was in charge of the school during that period, was recently seconded to another school and will not be returning. The school has now appointed two senior teachers to boost its leadership and management team.

## 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 provides a good quality education for its pupils. Excellent leadership by the headteacher has enabled a good pace of improvement. Good quality teaching that is occasionally outstanding ensures that pupils achieve well and reach above- average standards by the end of Year 2. The school rightly identifies pupils' writing skills as being weaker than reading and mathematics and has put good quality plans in place to address this. In particular, spelling, the structure of pupils' writing and the skills to use their imaginations more in writing are correctly highlighted as areas for development.

Strong provision ensures that children get off to a good start and make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, by the time they are ready to start in Year 1, most have reached the expected levels. This good progress continues throughout the school because teachers are skilled at providing well-organised and interesting lessons that ensure pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, are catered for fully. Teaching assistants provide very good support and backup for teachers, working very effectively with groups of pupils and individuals. Strong provision for pupils' care, support and guidance ensures that pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. However, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and they develop very good relationships with adults and each other. The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the school and especially with how well their children are looked after. Typical comments received from parents include: 'My four children have been extremely happy and have thrived at the school ... any problems are dealt with immediately and efficiently ... I have nothing but praise for the headteacher and the staff'. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and a few spoken to in Year 2 said they really look forward to coming back to school at the end of the holidays. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because teachers 'try very hard to make them exciting!' In all lessons seen this was borne out by the enthusiasm to join in and the full concentration demonstrated by nearly all pupils. Pupils' enjoyment of school is also strongly enhanced by excellent curriculum provision that is enhanced by a very wide range of extra activities.

Leadership and management are good. Staff work together as a highly effective team. Together with the headteacher, they accurately evaluate the school's performance. Governors work closely with them. Staff and governors together have a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this knowledge well to devise plans to aid future development. The recently appointed senior staff show high-level teaching skills. The school has much potential to move forward at a good pace in the future.

### What the school should do to improve further

Improve writing by focusing on developing pupils' spelling skills, their ability to write in a structured way and to think imaginatively.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

When they start school at the age of three, children show particular weaknesses in their personal, social and emotional development. However, as a result of the strong support and guidance they receive in the Nursery and Reception classes, they rapidly acquire the skills they need in learning to play and work together confidently. As a result, by the time they move into Year

1, most have caught up and have the skills necessary to help them concentrate and cope with a more formal approach to their learning. A few pupils at this stage and throughout the school need much extra support to aid their progress. Very clear systems for tracking individuals' progress and identifying their needs ensure they get the support needed. As a result, all pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the few that speak English as an additional language progress well.

Turbulence in staffing and the secondment of the headteacher to support another school during the last academic year caused a slight dip in results and pupils' achievement. However, assessment information for this year shows that good quality action plans, for example, to accelerate learning in areas such as reading and problem solving in mathematics, have had the desired effect, with pupils now well back on course to achieve well and reach above-average standards by the end of Year 2. Writing remains a relative weakness and the school has correctly isolated the need to improve pupils' spelling skills and their skills to think imaginatively and write stories and accounts in a more structured way.

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

### **Grade: 2**

When asked what they like about school, pupils have much to say about how friendly and helpful all of the staff are, and they are clearly very fond of their teachers. Lessons seen reflected this in the enthusiasm and desire that pupils show to please their teachers and produce their best efforts. Excellent behaviour and positive attitudes are a natural part of the purposeful working atmosphere seen in all activities. Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to stay safe and they say things like 'there's no such thing as bullying in our school'. They have no qualms about seeking adult assistance if they encounter any problems. Pupils' involvement in lots of physical education work and the school's clear focus on promoting healthy diets ensure that all individuals understand how to keep fit and healthy, and most put these notions into practice, for example, through joining in the school's wide-ranging after-school sports activities programme. Charity work and the activities of the school council involve pupils effectively in learning to contribute to the immediate and wider community. However, the school recognises that there is scope for boosting this area further, for example, by inviting local senior citizens in to watch school performances. The good standards achieved ensure pupils are well prepared to progress in the future. To help make their personal development outstanding, the school rightly identifies the need to give pupils a better understanding about how people from other cultures living in Britain live their lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Throughout the school, teachers' lesson planning is very good. In all sessions, pupils are given a clear understanding of what the teacher wants them to learn and this helps to ensure that all individuals stay fully focused on what they are doing. The wide range of practical activities given to children in the Foundation Stage ensures they progress rapidly in acquiring the skills needed to work both cooperatively and independently. Throughout the school, teachers use technology well. For example, activities are enlivened very effectively through the use of interactive whiteboards, with good quality multimedia presentations boosting pupils' interest and enjoyment. Teachers provide very clear and usually succinct explanations and good questions

to make pupils think hard. Work is always fully interactive, giving lots of good opportunities for individuals to join in. Activities are usually well matched to pupils' capabilities to help extend their ideas and understanding. However, occasionally, for example, when pupils are all given the same worksheet to do, opportunities for fully extending all individuals are missed. To improve writing further, the school has rightly recognised the need to improve the way in which teachers demonstrate writing tasks for pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is especially good at instilling enjoyment and an excitement for learning in all of the pupils. Classrooms abound with stimulating and interesting displays, plants being grown by pupils and a full range of all of the types of activities that pupils enjoy. Pupils' learning is fully boosted by the wide-ranging programme of daily after-school clubs, holiday fun clubs, visits and visitors coming to the school. Within this programme the school also caters well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Also, good quality projects are regularly provided to extend talented and gifted individuals. Timetabled weekly 'enrichment activities' sessions, where mixed-age groups of pupils work together on creative activities, also strongly boost pupils' learning as well as aiding their social awareness.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils' safety is ensured. All appropriate policies, including those for child protection, are fully in place. Staff have a very clear insight into the needs of all individuals and respond quickly and effectively where concerns are registered. Parents comment that the school is very quick to contact them and works very efficiently and effectively with them when any concern arises. The school makes the fullest possible use of all outside agencies to support pupils where necessary. Clear targets are set to guide pupils' academic progress. Some examples of exemplary marking were seen in pupils' books – giving full encouragement, but also showing pupils how they can improve. However, this practice is not consistent across the school and in some cases marking of work is too superficial.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. Overall, she has ensured that good improvement has occurred since the last inspection. However, there was some slippage in the school's performance during 2005/06 when the headteacher was seconded to support another local school. On her return she worked intensively with the staff, putting action plans in place to correct the blip in performance. This has resulted in the school getting rapidly back on track this year. The very detailed and carefully analysed assessment information reflects a fast recovery in pupils' achievement as well as isolating very clearly where relative weaknesses still lie. The headteacher recognises that she needs to get better at delegating responsibility. She has made an impressive start to this by appointing two senior staff to work alongside her. The excellent teaching skills of these individuals position them well to support colleagues and they have a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to help drive future school improvement programmes. Governors carry out their roles well. They monitor the work of the school carefully

and have a good involvement in all aspects of strategic management. The school has established very good links with other partner organisations to help promote pupils' learning. In order to accelerate its progress even more, the school recognises the need to streamline its current development plan so that priorities are clearer.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### 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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2007 Dear Children

Inspection of Plaistow Hill Infants' School, Roman Way, Higher St Budeaux, Plymouth, Devon PL5 2DT

- I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed coming to visit your school. Thank you for making me so welcome and helping me during the school's inspection. I enjoyed talking to many of you and particularly appreciated the very helpful discussion with some of you in Year 2 in the 'pond' area of the library. What a bunch of chatterboxes! The school is doing a good job. The staff are especially good at making sure you enjoy your time in school. Here are some other things I noticed:
- You make good progress and achieve good levels by the end of Year 2, although your work in writing is not always as good as other areas of your work.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You work with lots of enthusiasm in lessons and get on really well with staff and with each other.
- I was very impressed by how much those of you I spoke to know about the need to keep yourselves fit, healthy and safe.
- You have an excellent range of interesting activities to help you learn.
- The school does good job of taking care of you and you are taught well.
- Your headteacher is doing an excellent job of helping all the staff to work together and make things as good as possible for you.
- The thing your school now needs to do to help it become even better is:
- Improve your work in writing – especially with learning to spell better and producing imaginative and well-put-together stories.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.

Best wishes for the future Laurie Lewin Lead inspector