



Maple Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117298
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290789
Inspection date 13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hall Place Gardens
School category	Community		St Albans
Age range of pupils	4–11		Hertfordshire AL1 3SW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727 859053
Number on roll (school)	192	Fax number	01727 859053
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mike Philp
		Headteacher	Mr Timothy Bowen
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4–11	13 December 2006	290789

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Maple Primary School is an average-sized school serving an area of St Albans very close to the city centre. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds. A small number of pupils speaks English as an additional language. Most pupils start at school with levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to claim free school meals is below average. There is a special unit on site for pupils who are profoundly deaf. The school uses methods to encourage them to make best use of the hearing they have. This helps to develop their spoken language and to achieve educationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Maple Primary School is an outstanding school. Its aim is to provide children with enjoyable and challenging opportunities to fulfil their individual academic, creative and physical potential and the school does this very well indeed. Pupils grow considerably in responsibility and self-confidence, as well as making excellent progress in their studies. They feel completely safe, know outstandingly well how to live healthy lives, make excellent contributions to the community and are prepared well for their future well-being. They learn in an ethos in which all are valued, guided and supported. The school has a very special, close family atmosphere; parents comment that it is like a small village school. Everyone knows and cares for each other.

There are many outstanding aspects to the school's work, including the high quality of care, support and guidance for pupils, the teaching, the leadership of the school and the pupils' personal development. The school succeeds because it is a place where pupils feel secure and happy: they enjoy their lessons immensely whilst being challenged to give of their best. Pupils say how much they love their school and how many friends they have there. Unusually, many mentioned subjects that they study as being the best things about the school: numeracy, literacy, art and history. Some could not pick individual things they like. 'It is fantastic,' they said. 'We like everything!'

Achievement is outstanding. Most pupils begin at this school with levels of attainment that are close to or slightly above average for children of their age. Children's achievement is outstanding in the Foundation stage because of the excellent provision for them there. By the end of Year 2, they are well above average according to the outcomes of the teacher assessments. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is very high in English, mathematics and science, putting them in the top five per cent of schools across the country.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make outstanding progress because of the excellent help and support they receive. The excellent provision for pupils with impaired hearing helps them to make outstanding progress. The liaison with parents and outside agencies to promote their progress and well-being is excellent. The teachers in the unit also make a significant contribution to the education of pupils with special educational needs through the rest of the school. Working alongside children with disabilities also helps the personal development of mainstream pupils, who accept them into their classes and support them very well.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding aspects, particularly the teaching of music, physical education and French. A good range of extra-curricular activities adds significantly to pupils' enjoyment of their learning. The school includes some enterprise activities in its curriculum, as well as special opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. However, these occasional activities are not fully effective, as they are not yet a regular part of pupils' experience.

Both parents and pupils praise the teaching and the inspection found teaching to be excellent across the school. Lessons are very well planned, work is extremely well

matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities and relationships in classes are excellent. Pupils are highly motivated and try very hard to do well.

Excellent leadership, management and governance have brought about significant progress since the last inspection, because school self-evaluation is extremely thorough and accurate and there is a clear focus on raising attainment. The school sets challenging targets for every pupil and their progress towards them is closely monitored and supported. Consequently, the school has excellent capacity for continued improvement, and it gives outstanding value for money, because of the high quality, all-round education that its pupils enjoy.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school has no major weaknesses. However, there is the need to develop the curriculum further to provide more opportunities to challenge gifted and talented pupils and extend the range of activities for enterprise education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Tests and inspection evidence show that pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children in the foundation stage make excellent progress and almost all exceed the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 2, results are well above the national average. Currently, standards are very high by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, and they have been so for the last three years. In 2006, all pupils reached at least Level 4 in English and science, the level expected for their age. Almost all reached the expected level in mathematics. In English a very high percentage, 52%, reached the above average Level 5. In mathematics 52% and in science 71% reached Level 5. These results are significantly higher than the national average. Overall, the school exceeded the targets it set for itself in 2006.

A strong feature of the school's success is the all-round progress that pupils make. Pupils also achieve outstandingly in music, sport and art.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding, both in the main school and the special unit. Attendance is well above average. Staff present very good role models and treat pupils with respect.

Consequently, almost all behave very well; they are confident, polite and considerate. Pupils are keen to face new challenges, work hard and demonstrate mature attitudes. They very much enjoy their lessons and appreciate the ways that their teachers plan their .Pupils make an extremely good contribution to the school community. They have excellent opportunities to be involved in decision making and their views are taken seriously and acted upon. The school council is an active and effective force for

school improvement and helps pupils to understand democracy and learn to take responsibility for their decisions.

All pupils flourish at the school. They enjoy their learning exceedingly well and feel completely safe. They know how to stay healthy and are prepared well for their future well-being through the excellent citizenship programme and the development of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning throughout the school are outstanding. Teachers plan lessons well with specific objectives for pupils. They also work closely and very effectively with teaching assistants, who make a valuable contribution to the progress that pupils make. Teachers' high expectations and the pace in the outstanding lessons mean that all pupils learn quickly and make excellent progress. The management of pupils is excellent and relationships are very good indeed. Pupils concentrate and work hard because the lessons are interesting and enjoyable. Teachers pitch the work at exactly the right levels to both challenge and support pupils in their learning. They also make excellent use of ICT, both as a resource to increase the impact of their teaching and as a tool to help pupils to learn. Staff in the special unit are particularly skilled at improving pupils' communication skills. This is because of their considerable knowledge of, and expertise in, hearing impairment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. The planning of activities provides excellent opportunities for pupils to reinforce their basic literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. Very good provision for teaching physical education, French and music enhances the curriculum by offering excellent expressive and creative opportunities and by ensuring that pupils are healthy and fit. The school provides a good range of enrichment and extra curricular activities to promote enjoyment and to extend pupils' learning. There are some activities that give gifted and talented pupils the extra challenge that they need, mainly in sporting and musical activities and work with a local bakery provides occasional opportunities for enterprise education. Such activities are beneficial but are not yet fully effective, because they are not a regular part of the curriculum. In the Reception class, there is a very good balance of learning through play activities and more formal teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support given to pupils contribute significantly to the progress that they make. Pupils feel happy and safe and all those spoken to

were confident that there is no bullying or racial discrimination. They know that any incidents will be dealt with firmly. All staff give close attention to health and safety issues, including child protection arrangements. The detailed checks on the suitability of all adults who come into contact with pupils fully meet current requirements. Teachers and support staff are sensitive to the needs of all individuals. The care and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, is outstanding. They receive excellent individual support to help them to overcome their difficulties. Parents were almost unanimous in their praise for the school and the care it gives their children. Pupils also benefit from excellent academic guidance. They are set clear targets and their progress towards them is monitored and supported very effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management have brought about very significant improvements in the effectiveness of the school. Leadership at every level, including the Foundation Stage and the special unit, is highly effective. The school's analysis of its own performance is of excellent quality and the school is, therefore, extremely well placed to continue to improve. All teachers share a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take a full part in the process of school improvement planning and review. The procedures for professional development and performance management are excellent. Almost all parents praise the quality of leadership at all levels in the school.

The governing body's support and monitoring of the school are excellent and they have been responsible for major improvements in accommodation and safety.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

13th December 2006

Dear Pupils

Maple School, Hall Place Gardens, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3SW

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to me when I visited your school. I enjoyed sharing your lessons and talking to you. You all told me how much you like your school and I agree with you that it is an outstanding school. There are many excellent things about it. You said that everyone is friendly and helps each other. This is one of the reasons that you are so happy and doing so well at school. I was impressed with the confidence you show and how helpful you are to each other. I enjoyed the junior assembly. You were very well behaved and clearly showed your enjoyment of the demonstration of science experiments. Some of you helped and did so very responsibly and well. The best things about your school are:

- You work hard in lessons and behaviour is outstanding.
- You do very well in the tests that you take: your reading, writing and mathematics are all very good.
- Your headteacher and senior teachers have excellent ideas about ways to improve the school.
- You are set clear targets and helped to achieve them.
- Teachers work hard to make lessons enjoyable.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and all adults care for you very well indeed.
- You are encouraged to be healthy and safe.

I have asked your school try to make things even better. The most important things are:

- To find even more ways to develop your special gifts and talents.
- To provide more ways for you to learn about business and enterprise.

Keep working hard and make the most of your time at this excellent school.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Cosway Lead Inspector