

Preston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117403
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290820
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roy Blyth
Headteacher	Ms Alison Brooks
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Back Lane Preston Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7UJ
Telephone number	01462 451734
Fax number	01462 451734

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Preston Voluntary Controlled Primary School is much smaller than average. Fewer pupils than the national average are eligible for free school meals and virtually all speak English at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. However, the proportions of these pupils are higher in some year groups due to the small size of the school and consequent variation in class sizes. Attainment on entry to the Reception class covers the full range, but overall is at the expected levels for children of that age. There have been significant changes to staffing since the time of the previous inspection and many coordinators are relatively new to their roles. The school has been awarded Healthy School status and recently the new Healthy School Award. Due to the very small size of some cohorts, results of statutory tests are not always published to protect pupil confidentiality.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Preston Primary School provides a good standard of education. Pupils enjoy school and, as a result, their attendance is excellent. Parents are very supportive of the school and pleased with the progress their children make. The main reason for the good standards the school achieves is because of the good, rigorous self-evaluation which is undertaken by the headteacher, which then leads into plans for development. This evaluation has identified some minor areas for improvement as the school strives to achieve the highest standards in all aspects of its work.

Children in the Reception class settle quickly and easily into school because of the good provision, particularly for personal development. This gives them a good start to their formal education. Provision for the Foundation Stage is good and children's personal development is very good. In reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2, progress and achievement are good. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Progress from Year 3 to Year 6 is good. Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Across the school, provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan each lesson well to build steadily on previous learning. Marking is generally good. Targets are explained to pupils clearly and put into their books for easy reference. However, the school has identified that the extent to which marking helps pupils to make progress in writing and mathematics is variable. While it is very good on occasion, there are times when too little is demanded, particularly of higher attaining pupils or when areas highlighted in writing in one context are not followed through to another. There are plans to develop coordinators' roles in monitoring to ensure greater consistency in this aspect of teaching.

The curriculum is good and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to choose from, especially when the small size of the school is taken into consideration. Personal development is excellent, and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very high standard. Pupils develop high levels of self-assurance and communicate with confidence and sensitivity. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The care, guidance and support that the school provides for its pupils are good. Pupils have an effective knowledge of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Effective care is also taken to ensure that pupils know who to turn to if they need help with a problem and this makes them confident and happy. Playtimes are very pleasant times where boys and girls of all ages play together very well. Leadership and management are good. The effective resources, including the extensive grounds are used well and finances are managed well to provide good value for money. The school has a good capacity to continue to maintain high standards and improve still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' marking of pupils' work is consistent and that it helps them to improve even further.
- Develop coordinators' roles in monitoring standards and progress in their subjects across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall for pupils from all groups including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Children make good, steady progress overall in the Foundation Stage, particularly in personal and social development and early writing and mathematical skills. Standards are broadly in line with those expected at the start of Year 1. In Year 1 and 2, pupils make good progress overall. Standards are generally above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Achievement and progress in Years 3 to 6 are good. Pupils attain and sometimes exceed the targets set for them. Standards by the end of Year 6 are generally above expectations in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupil's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. The school encourages children to make choices and to learn to take on responsibility from Reception upwards. The youngest children generally relate well to each other and disputes and bad feelings are rare and are dealt with speedily. Behaviour is good. As they grow older, pupils develop skills in dealing with others extremely well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are integrated fully in all aspects of school life. Pupils enjoy being in school and their attendance is excellent. They have excellent opportunities to become involved in the life in the community through the school council, which prepares them well for later life. Pupils of all ages mix together exceptionally well. They develop an excellent understanding of the need to stay safe and of the value of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All adults have good relationships with pupils and are consistent in their expectations of personal development and behaviour. There is a particularly good emphasis placed on developing pupils' personal and social skills. Assessment is used regularly, accurately and forms an integral part of the school day. Teachers effectively use the knowledge gained about the children when planning learning sessions. However, the school has identified that the quality of marking is variable in the information it gives pupils on how to improve. On a few occasions standards are accepted that are age-appropriate, rather than the best a pupil could achieve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The organisation of the curriculum ensures that pupils of all abilities do work that is at the right level to follow on from previous lessons in that subject. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The school has identified the need to develop the curriculum for reception children to include more use of the outdoor area. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in relation to its size. Pupils benefit from a good range of sporting and other activities. This includes the opportunity

to learn French from reception upwards. These activities have a positive impact on pupils' progress and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children's happiness and safety are promoted effectively. Provision for children with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. The systems the school has developed to monitor children's academic and social progress are rigorous, although marking has been identified as an area that can be improved still further. Teachers set challenging targets for children in their work. Health is promoted extremely well and pupils learn to make good choices, such as in their diet. Good care is also taken to ensure that even the youngest children know to turn to an adult if they need help with a problem and this makes them confident and happy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear view of the school based on rigorous and accurate monitoring. However, due to the very small size of the school and the recent staff changes, the leadership of some major subjects is relatively new. The school has highlighted the development of coordinators' roles as an area for improvement in the near future. Governors do a good job. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide effective levels of support. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its many activities, such as 'camp outs' and charity balls.

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Annex A

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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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	2
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?	2
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?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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

17th May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Preston Primary School, Back Lane, Preston, Hitchin Hertfordshire, SG4 7UJ

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited recently and for being so polite and friendly.

What I liked most about your school.

- You enjoy lessons because school is a happy place and you come to school very regularly unless you are really ill.
- The teaching is helping you to make good progress in your learning.
- Those of you who find learning more difficult are given good help.
- Teachers set clear rules for you and help you to behave well and your personal development is excellent.
- You are taught about how to be healthy and take care about what you eat.
- There is a good range of extra activities, like sport and French, which I know that you really enjoy.
- Your headteacher knows what to do to improve your school still further. She has already identified the things the school needs to do to next.

Mrs Brooks, the governors and staff do a good job and have plans to improve the school even more. They are planning to make sure you know how to make your work even better. Teachers in charge of all subjects are planning to find out even more about exactly how well each one of you is doing.

I really enjoyed talking to you about your school and watching you learn and wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely Mrs Barnes