

Propps Hall Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105663
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308911
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carmel Taylor
Headteacher	Mr R Partington
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
School address	Propps Hall Drive Failsworth Manchester Lancashire M35 0ND
Telephone number	0161 7708400
Fax number	0

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The vast majority of pupils are White British, but there are also a few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Pupils are taught in four mixed age classes, including a class covering two key stages. The school holds the National Healthy School Award and the Activemark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school where pupils achieve well, both academically and personally. Pupils are happy and secure in school and enjoy their education. These are important factors in their good progress.

Most children enter the Nursery with skills well below those typical for their age. They make good progress overall in the Foundation Stage and especially so in Reception. Progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is also good. By the end of Year 6, standards are average and pupils have achieved well. Overall, pupils do best in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing, while satisfactory, is less rapid. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make good progress alongside their peers.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' all-round development. It is carefully focused on developing pupils' basic skills and in promoting their active engagement in their learning. The school devotes substantial financial resources to provide pupils with a good range of visits which foster their enjoyment of learning. The success of this approach is reflected in the improving standards of pupils' work. The quality of teaching is good and some of it is outstanding. A common strength is the excellence of relationships between the pupils and the staff. Teachers' questioning encourages full participation in lessons and provides pupils with ample opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills. This ensures that all pupils are prepared to 'have a go' and contributes greatly to pupils' developing sense of self-worth. Care and welfare arrangements, to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs and to ensure their well-being, are of good quality. This promotes pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning very well. Child protection arrangements are in place. These are robust and are reviewed regularly. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying pupils who would benefit from extra support are very effective. Pupils are given clear guidance about what they must do to improve their work. However, assessment procedures for the very youngest children are not as well developed and consistently applied.

Because the quality of leadership and management is good the school has made substantial improvement since its previous inspection three years ago. Most notably, pupils' attainment and achievement by the end of Year 6 have improved and the quality of teaching and learning is better. Measures to safeguard pupils meet government requirements. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Partnerships with other organisations are good and benefit pupils' learning and well-being. The school makes good use of its resources. The school is well set for further sustained improvement and offers good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. Children join the Nursery with skills which are well below those expected for their age, especially in speaking and in their emotional development. They make good progress towards their early learning goals. However, procedures for assessing children on entry to the Nursery and keeping track of their earliest progress are still being developed and are not yet used consistently. In the Reception class, children continue to make good progress in their learning. Here, assessment procedures are secure and progress

is carefully tracked. By the time children join Year 1, their skills remain below average although they have made some especially good gains in numeracy and in their personal and social development. Children are well behaved and enjoy their learning. This is because the staff care for them well. They ensure that activities always contain a strong fun element so that children's energies are fully focused on their learning. The curriculum is flexibly adapted to meet children's needs and to enable them to pursue their particular interests. There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Expert teaching and the careful deployment of additional adults ensure that children's speaking skills are developed well in purposeful conversations. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Accurately assess the attainments of children entering the Nursery and consistently track and record their progress during their time there.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils build well on their earlier attainment as they progress through the school. Results at the end of Year 2 were well below average in 2007. Unverified results for 2008 show a considerable rise in pupils' attainment, in response to high quality teaching. Standards in Year 2 are now average. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 6, to attain average standards. Standards are, however, above average in reading and mathematics and average in science. Pupils do very well in reading as a result of the school's very consistent and successful focus on developing their reading ability from the Foundation Stage onwards. In mathematics, pupils quickly acquire a good grasp of terminology and enjoy the practical application of number skills. Standards in writing are below average, partly due to a legacy of prior underachievement in this skill. The school's strategies for raising pupils' achievement in writing have yet to have the full impact needed to ensure sustained achievement, especially in Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils get on well with each other and develop a healthy self-esteem in response to the school's successful strategies for building up their self-confidence. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles as has been recognised in the school's recent awards.

They have a good awareness of how to stay safe, are quick to comply with teachers' instructions and act sensibly both in school and in the playground. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and enthusiasm for their learning both in the classroom and during their visits to local places of interest. Pupils behave well. They make good use of opportunities to contribute to the school community through the school council and perform a wide range of duties very responsibly. Overall, pupils develop the skills they need to succeed in later life well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very good relationships between staff and pupils build up pupils' self-confidence and their 'can-do' spirit. Pupils are well motivated and want to do well for their teachers. Teachers ensure they take an active part in their learning and are very willing to contribute and explore new ideas. Pupils' opinions are valued and teachers question them well to develop their speaking skills. Pupils support each other well in paired learning tasks, including 'talking partner' routines. In the best lessons, expectations of pupils' progress are high and planning is of a similar quality. Work is carefully matched to meet the needs of all pupils and excellent use is made of teaching assistants to ensure all pupils learn at a brisk pace. Most teachers make good use of assessment. Pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect on their own and their partner's work and this enables them to identify the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum, overall, meets the needs of pupils well. There is a good emphasis on ensuring pupils develop their self-confidence and enjoyment of learning while acquiring basic skills. This process is enhanced by themed weeks, such as 'Maths Week' and regular visits, for example, to local galleries, which become the subject of follow-up work in school to extend pupils' learning, including in information and communication technology. Residential visits reinforce for the older pupils their good sense of community and their personal and team-building skills. Reading programmes are used very well to develop pupils' fluency in reading. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by an effective mixture of withdrawal sessions and support in class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Systems to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. The school makes very effective use of outside agencies and its own pastoral strategies and procedures. By doing so, it removes barriers to learning, promotes good attitudes and behaviour and promotes a strong community spirit. A good example of the former is the deployment of skilled speech therapists, which enables the pupils who require this extra help to take the small steps they need to make good progress in their learning. Staff are always careful to include pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language in all questioning and classroom activities. This builds their self-esteem quickly and helps them to settle in very well. Tracking and assessment systems to support pupils' academic development have improved markedly in recent years. Overall, teachers make good use of oral feedback and marking to promote pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders offer complementary strengths to provide a very clear direction for the work of the school. Their hard work and commitment, allied to carefully considered actions, have helped to ensure a constant surge in school improvement in the last three years. Good systems for

monitoring the work of the school and helping pupils achieve challenging targets are in place. Consequently, leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' standards and what should be done to further improve these. Resources, including staff, are skilfully deployed to ensure pupils make good progress. The school is moving forward well on several fronts, for example, in the recent establishment of a children's centre, which has boosted its reputation in the local community and already contributed to an increase in the school roll. The substantial improvements in provision are now increasingly reflected in rising academic standards and achievement. Leaders rightly acknowledge that more work remains to be done to sustain this rise in standards and to improve pupils' skills in writing. Governors' systems for monitoring the work of the school are good and this enables them to support school improvement well.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

I am writing to thank you for your help when my colleague and I inspected your school recently and to tell you about our findings. Very early in our visit, I attended the Key Stage 2 assembly where you sang by heart (and very warmly), 'We are the children of Propps Hall School, learning together and having fun.' That sums up many of the good things we found out about your school.

Your school has improved greatly in the last three years and gives you a good education. The children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start but they still have some learning to catch up on when they join Year 1. You make good progress as you move up through the school which helps you reach the standards expected for your age by the end of Year 6. Indeed, you do better than that in reading and in mathematics. However, at the moment your standards in writing are below average. To help you reach higher standards in English, I have asked the staff to concentrate on developing your writing skills.

The school works well to look after you and ensures you develop well the personal and social skills you will need for later learning and life in general. The headteacher and his staff try to make your learning fun and meaningful and take you on lots of enjoyable visits.

You get on very well with your teachers, enjoy their lessons and are taught well. We noticed that you know how to look at your own work and that of your partner on the table with an 'outsider's eyes'. This helps you to become more confident in your learning. The school's arrangements for checking on your progress are better in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 than in the Nursery. I have asked the headteacher to look into this.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and trying to do even better in your writing tasks.