

Knowle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113277
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	311187
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joy Littlejohn
Headteacher	Judy Milford
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
School address	Ringmore Way West Park Plymouth PL5 3QG
Telephone number	01752 365364
Fax number	01752 351007

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of mainly social housing on the outskirts of Plymouth. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity, and the proportion who are at an early stage of learning English is below average. The school offers a breakfast club and seeks to expand the range of additional services that it provides.

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. A parent's comment that, 'I am very pleased with the way my child is taught and know that the staff put the needs of the children first', is typical of many. Children start school with levels of skill and knowledge below those expected, especially in communication, language and literacy and in their social and emotional development. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, they attain standards in national English tests that are average, representing good progress. They make good progress in other subjects, especially information and communication technology (ICT) where they reach the expected standards.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They behave well and report that bullying has reduced significantly and that any that occurs is dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives. They eat healthily and take regular exercise. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, by such events as family assemblies that are well attended by parents and relatives, and interesting activities, such as a multicultural week and a 'wedding ceremony' in the local church. Pupils' attendance is below average but the school does all it can to encourage good attendance, including through its excellent work with external agencies. This is part of the very good provision made for pupils' care and welfare.

Although much of the teaching is good, there are variations which lead to it being only satisfactory overall. Strengths include the use of assessment to plan work and to track pupils' progress which, together with good marking of work, leads to effective targets that help pupils understand how to make progress. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their work with each other. In some lessons, the pace is too slow, or the teacher talks for too long, and pupils show signs of boredom. The school recognises and is tackling these weaknesses which have been identified through effective and accurate monitoring.

Much good work has been done to make the curriculum interesting and relevant. There is a good range of additional activities which includes opportunities for more able pupils to work with others of similar ability. Themed weeks have a good impact on pupils' learning as they remember what they have learned, often a year or more after the activity took place. Exceptionally good use is made of the school's many external links, for instance with 'Business in the Community'. Children in the Foundation Stage do not have a stimulating outdoor environment in which to develop their learning skills.

The improving quality of the school is due to the good leadership and management provided by the dedicated headteacher and her team. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and effective, and challenging targets have been set and achieved, for instance concerning improving pupils' progress and increasing the involvement of parents. Governors support the school well. The quality of subject leadership is variable and, in some areas, the headteacher and her deputy take on too much, for instance in the formal performance management of all staff. Nevertheless, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when special measures were removed, and there is good potential for these improvements to continue.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Most children are well known to staff when they start school as they share resources with the pre-school on the site, which most attend. This leads to effective planning to meet the children's needs. They make good progress in their social development and learn to behave well and to share with others. There is a good mix of play and more formal activities. Some, such as when children are dressing in various uniforms, leads to very good language development, but when they are in the arid outdoor area with little stimulation, their play is much less purposeful. The organisation of classes in the Foundation Stage does not ensure that all children receive an education of similar quality. There is evidence of effective leadership of the Foundation Stage, but as the leader is seconded to the local authority, the impact of this is limited.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress and enjoyment of lessons by ensuring that all teaching is as stimulating and exciting as the best.
- Ensure that the work of leaders and managers is focussed on key priorities and, by improving subject leadership, is more evenly distributed among the team.
- Improve the opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to learn through high quality outdoor play

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, by the end of which most attain at least some of the goals set for children of their age. They make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Although standards at the end of Year 2 are below average, most pupils can add and subtract accurately and write in simple sentences. Good progress continues in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain average standards in English, with a significant proportion attaining above average standards. In mathematics and science, whilst standards attained in 2007 were below average, the work of current pupils and the school's own tracking of their progress show that they are on course to attain average standards, representing good achievement. Pupils reach or exceed the expected standards in some other subjects, such as ICT and art. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the more able, all make good progress. The school correctly identified that girls were making slower progress than boys, and is successfully tackling this through work to raise girls' aspirations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Although many children start school with poor social skills, they soon learn to behave well because staff make their expectations clear. This good behaviour continues throughout the school. Pupils with behavioural difficulties receive very good support and hence there is little disruption of learning. Pupils enjoy school, except when the pace of lessons is too slow. The attendance of a small minority is poor, sometimes because of a lack of family support, and the school works very well with the welfare service and other agencies to improve attendance. Pupils know the importance of a healthy diet and most take plenty of exercise, making the most of opportunities for play and sport. They know how to keep safe, for instance when using the internet. They make a good contribution to the community. The school council, having

succeeded in having the toilets improved, now wishes to see ties introduced as part of the uniform. Pupils make good progress in developing the skills they will need in adult life, especially in literacy and ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Much of the teaching is good, but there are variations which lead to it being only satisfactory overall. Teachers use assessment well to plan work that meets the needs of their pupils. They use ICT very well to enhance progress and to engage pupils' interest in their work, as when pupils in Year 6 presented their curriculum vitae with photographs and other artwork. Marking, especially in English, is used very well to both encourage pupils and to identify how their work could be improved. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants, although their deployment to help other pupils is less effective. Where pupils of more than one age are taught in the same class, planning is less effective in meeting the needs of all. In some lessons, the teacher talks for too long or the task does not motivate pupils, so that some make slower progress. As a result, pupils make better progress in some classes than they do in others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection. Particular strengths are the way ICT is used throughout the curriculum to enhance pupils' progress, and the excellent use of external partners to widen their experience in a range of ways. Themed weeks, such as for creative arts and for cultural understanding, have a very good impact on pupils' learning. There is a good range of additional activities which are popular with pupils. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their self-esteem and social skills through subjects such as drama and music. Weaker aspects of the provision are the limited opportunities to learn a modern foreign language, and for children in the Foundation Stage to learn through outdoor play.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive outstanding care and all current requirements to help keep them safe are in place. Much is done to encourage parents into school. The comment that 'I feel comfortable in approaching the school with any problems or concerns' is typical of many by parents. The excellent links with external partners mean that matters of concern are quickly followed up with the appropriate agency or agencies. Pupils are set targets based on their past progress and these are effective in helping older pupils to make good progress. The targets are very effective in raising standards of English but are less effective in mathematics. The school has very good links with a wide range of secondary schools, and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The dedicated headteacher is highly respected by parents. Under her leadership, the school has improved significantly in a relatively short time. The focus on improving teaching and hence pupils' progress has led to significantly higher standards of pupils' work and behaviour. Leaders and managers at all levels are hardworking and committed to the further improvement of the school. Some, including the headteacher and her deputy, carry a heavy workload. In part, this is due to tasks that no longer need to be pursued with the same intensity as was once the case, such as the weekly monitoring of all teachers' plans. Senior managers are aware that there is a need to further develop the skills of middle managers, so that more tasks can be delegated. Nevertheless, due to effective monitoring and evaluation, there is a good shared understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of how the latter can be improved. Governors share this understanding and support the school well, while appropriately holding staff accountable for their work.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	3
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?	3
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

17 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Knowle Primary School, Plymouth PL5 3QG

We very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. We want to thank you for spending time with us. We especially enjoyed talking to you as we found you confident, friendly and able to express your views very clearly. We especially enjoyed the family assembly led by Year 4.

Yours is a good school. These are some of the most important things about it.

- You all make good progress, and pupils in Year 6 get average results in English tests and assessments. In mathematics and science, results are below average, but you are making good progress. Your ICT work is also good.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons are interesting and fun. You find the way that teachers mark your work very helpful. Sometimes lessons are rather slow.
- You know a lot about how to keep healthy and safe.
- Your behaviour is good and we were particularly impressed by the way you listen to each other and to your teachers.
- Your attendance is below average but this is mainly due to a small number of you who do not always come to school when you should.
- You told us that you mostly enjoy school, especially all the different activities on offer including sport, music and ICT.
- You are cared for very well and teachers tell you how to improve your work by setting you targets, which the older ones of you understand well.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors lead the school well.
- The school has excellent links with other schools and with your parents, who correctly have a high opinion of the education you are given.
- We have asked the school to improve three things:
 - to make sure that all your lessons are as interesting and exciting as the best ones; you can help by politely telling the teacher if you find the work is too easy or difficult
 - to make sure that the headteacher and other senior staff do not have to spend lots of time doing paperwork, by getting rid of it or by giving it to other people to do
 - to improve the outdoor area for the Foundation Stage children.

You can also help by always coming to school unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely Paul Sadler Lead Inspector

17 March 2008



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Lead Inspector

