

Drake Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113292
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	311192
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Bullard
Headteacher	Peter Daniels
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Saltash Road Keyham Plymouth PL2 2BE
Telephone number	01752 567649
Fax number	01752 605181

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: steps taken to maintain the improvements in standards and achievement seen in recent years; strategies to improve standards in writing, particularly for boys; and systems for setting targets to bring about improvements.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work and a range of documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils in the school are of White British heritage. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools.

The school holds a Healthy Schools award, the Gold Activemark award and Plymouth's Inclusion Kitemark. It works as part of a learning network that aims to combat social disadvantage, remove barriers to learning and support pupils at risk of exclusion. A learning mentor and parent support advisor are available to offer support to individual pupils and their families where appropriate.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils thrive, both academically and personally, in this outstanding school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how well their children do, making comments such as, 'I would recommend Drake to any parent' and 'I cannot praise the school enough for the help and support they have given my son'. Their confidence is fully justified. A key strength of the school is the degree of attention given to supporting each individual child and 'going the extra mile' to nurture those who need special care and support.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well as they move through the school. Children joining the Reception class usually have limited skills, particularly in speaking and listening. They make good progress so that, by the time they start in Year 1, they are working broadly in line with expectations in most areas. Some aspects of language and literacy are still below expected levels. Pupils make up ground in these areas as good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average by the end of Year 2, an improvement over the past three years. The rate of progress increases in subsequent years and accelerates noticeably at the top end of the school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average at the end of Year 6. There is some variation in results in national tests, which is related to the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in each year group. However, these pupils also achieve extremely well in relation to their starting points because of the well-targeted support that they receive.

Underpinning the school's success is excellent leadership from the headteacher and senior staff. Rigorous systems for checking on the school's work pinpoint areas for improvement and lead to effective action with challenging targets set. This is illustrated well by the current initiative to improve boys' writing. A range of imaginative strategies has been introduced to increase pupils' interest and motivation in writing. These include good use of drama and information and communication technology (ICT) as a stimulus. For pupils in the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2, a stimulating multi-sensory approach to teaching letter sounds and strategies for word-building is improving skills at a rapid rate. A group of boys in Years 5 and 6 have been involved in a tightly focused programme that encourages them to evaluate and improve particular features in their written work. Although girls are still doing better overall, the gap is closing, and boys in Year 6 are now reaching higher levels in writing.

Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and appreciate the wide range of opportunities to extend their skills and experiences, including clubs and visits. These also include an impressive range of specialist facilities, often the outcome of successful bidding by school managers for extra funding from a variety of sources. These have significantly enhanced pupils' achievements. Provision for sport is exceptional. A new sports hall and the appointment of a sports coordinator have brought superb opportunities for coaching and participation in a very wide range of competitive events. Music is taught by a specialist teacher. Instrumental tuition is available and music-making in class lessons is enhanced by very good use of ICT. The school makes very good links with the community. It draws on a wide range of expertise to enhance pupils' learning and broaden their community awareness. Recent work with a local artist produced some striking studies of the area around the school. Provision for personal, social and health education is a real strength. This leads to pupils having an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. The behaviour of the vast majority is very good in lessons and around the school. Extra support for those who have difficulty in conforming to expectations is usually effective

in bringing about improvements where necessary. The school is very successful in integrating pupils with social or behavioural difficulties, who have sometimes struggled to cope elsewhere.

Pupils learn quickly because of the lively, focused and purposeful teaching. In many lessons, very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage their attention and to demonstrate key teaching points. Expectations are high. Teachers use imaginative strategies to encourage pupils to use their key skills. In an ICT lesson, for example, pupils worked well in pairs to input data to 'identify a villain', using a variety of clues from 'witnesses'. Resources are generally of high quality and used well. Pupils benefit, for example, from two well-equipped libraries. However, many of the resources available to the Reception children are beginning to get very worn and book provision in the classroom is limited.

The views of pupils are canvassed regularly and these feed into plans for school development. The school council is instrumental in working to bring about improvements. Recent activities have included budgeting for the purchase of new play equipment and a meeting with the school cook to negotiate changes in menus. Pupils are given a very good view of how well they are doing and what they need to work towards. Marking is informative and evaluative. Clear targets are set for improvement and pupils are very positive about these, making comments such as 'I know better what to do now'. Pupils enjoy working collaboratively in lessons and are often very task-orientated. Year 6 pupils take their responsibilities seriously and know, for instance, that they have an important role in helping younger ones with playground activities and with reading. These pupils are mature and confident and very well prepared for the next stage in learning.

The school's recent awards are testament to the quality of its work and continual search to improve opportunities for the pupils. A breakfast club has been introduced to encourage a prompt start to the day. Attendance has improved and the school has good systems to encourage regular attendance and to follow up quickly any unexplained absences. The learning mentor and parental support advisor play a valuable role in working with families where there are concerns. Governors are very well informed and organised and, with the headteacher and staff, are continually looking for ways in which further improvements might be made.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a very good start. They make good progress in all areas of learning and do particularly well in their personal and social development. They are secure and confident in the classroom and learn to play and work together in pairs and small groups. Although most children are working within expected levels by the end of the Reception Year, girls have recently been doing better than boys, particularly in early aspects of literacy. Strategies have been put in place to close the gap and staff are identifying rapid improvements in children's skills. Boys are responding well to opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. However, it is too early to see the full impact of recent initiatives. The outdoor area has been recently improved with the provision of a large canopy so that it can be used in all weathers. There are good opportunities in this area to get involved in games and large-scale activities and to use sand and water. However, some resources here and in the classroom area are rather shabby. The reading area is uninviting because the range of books is limited and it is difficult to display them so that children can easily see what is available.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and range of resources to support learning in the Reception Year.

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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?	1
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	1

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?	1
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Drake Primary School, Plymouth PL2 2BE

You may remember that I visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all those of you who explained what you were doing in lessons and what was happening around the school. Particular thanks to the school council members who gave me so much helpful information when we met. They are doing a very good job in helping to make improvements. Do go on helping them with your suggestions. I thought you would be interested in what I am saying in my report. Yours is an outstanding school. You told me how much you enjoy everything that goes on there and I can see why!

Here are some of the special things that I noticed

- Teachers make lessons interesting and exciting and this helps you to learn new things quickly
- Your headteacher and governors work very hard to improve the facilities available to you and your families; you are lucky to have a superb new sports hall, all those new computers in the ICT suite and specialist teaching in music!
- You have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy – I was very impressed with the variety of snacks available in your healthy tuck shop
- You have excellent opportunities to go on visits, work with visitors and join clubs, and there are also lots of special events to help you learn about the wider world, such as global awareness week and work on recycling
- Those of you in Year 6 are mature and sensible, and well prepared for the move to secondary schools.

I have suggested one thing that needs to be improved.

- Some of the equipment and books in the Reception class are looking very tired and need to be replaced to make learning more exciting for the youngest children.

Thank you again for all your help. Best wishes

Shirley Billington Lead Inspector

29 February 2008

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Lead Inspector