

Prettygate Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114744
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311690
Inspection date	6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	John Francis

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Pincombe
Headteacher	Mrs C A P Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Plume Avenue Colchester Essex CO3 4PH
Telephone number	01206 572357
Fax number	01206 768735

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The following issues were inspected: the achievement of boys and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the use of marking and target setting and its impact on pupils' progress. Evidence was gathered from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation and records of pupils' achievement and progress, discussions with senior leaders in the school and with pupils and the views of parents through the questionnaire returns. 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 the report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school and over half of the pupils come from outside the immediate area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language is well below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is also below average. Fewer pupils than normally found have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with that expected for children of this age.

The school has a number of awards including Investors in People status, the National Healthy Schools Award, Active Mark Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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 school. Indeed, some aspects of the school's work are outstanding, a view clearly supported by the parents who are overwhelmingly supportive of all it does. The school's leaders have a realistic view of its successes and the direction they want to take towards further improvement. There is no feeling of complacency about achievement to date. Good leadership, a good curriculum and skilful teaching ensure pupils start well and make good progress. There are excellent systems in place to identify pupils' specific needs and the skilful work of the teaching assistants is very effective in supporting the more vulnerable children and ensuring that they also achieve well. This school's national award for its inclusion practices reflects this commitment. Teachers build successfully on the excellent start children make in Reception, and by Year 2, standards are above, and often well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This continues the pattern of high standards seen in national assessments over many years.

However, these are not the only skills the school provides for its pupils. There is also a strong emphasis on developing personal and social skills - the whole pupil. The culture of the school is supportive and leads towards pupils' outstanding personal development. This does not just happen by chance, but is encouraged through the excellent leadership and guidance shown by the headteacher, well supported by all staff, and a knowledgeable and active governing body. Effective leadership at all levels has enabled the school to make good progress since its last inspection, particularly in its development of mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Some of the work done by these young pupils in ICT is of exceptional quality and would not be out of place at upper junior school level. The school demonstrates a good capacity for continuing improvement.

From the Foundation Stage onwards, the strong emphasis on care and children's personal development, gives them an excellent understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy and form good relationships. As a result, behaviour is excellent; pupils are polite, friendly and have very positive attitudes to the school and each other. This excellent provision also leads directly to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a deep understanding of different cultures and benefit from a wide range of cultural experiences through, for example, music, art and their links with a school in Africa. Opportunities to develop spiritually to excellent levels are carefully built into many of the 'discovery' lessons and the lively, but thoughtful assemblies. Many parents commented at length on this outstanding feature of the school's work in their questionnaire returns. These are typical of the many views expressed: 'The school provides lots of enjoyable experiences for the children', and 'we are impressed by the way the school encourages the children to think about others and help children and communities less fortunate than themselves'.

Pupils are well cared for and procedures to safeguard children are secure. The excellent assessment and recording systems in place enable class teachers to track pupils' progress and set very challenging targets for improvement. The system used in the Foundation Stage is particularly innovative, with continuous assessments being made and entered on to a palm held computer for instant recording and tracking.

Teaching is good and many parents commented on how the school is 'very approachable and supportive'. A view shared by pupils. The pupils have a good understanding of what they can do and what they need to do to get even better. Good, informative marking encourages pupils

and guides their progress. As a result, they are confident and very well motivated. They enjoy the steadily broadening curriculum. However, while the curriculum is good, it is not yet capitalising on all of the pupils' excellent personal skills, for example, their excellent behaviour and ability to work cooperatively, to extend the use of investigative approaches even more. Neither do pupils have enough opportunities to decide for themselves the path they want to follow in their work; some learning in Key Stage 1 is over-directed. This is in contrast to the excellent balance between teacher led and child initiated work achieved in the Reception classes. The success and achievements already seen from following a 'discovery' approach provide the school with an excellent model of practice and a springboard for further curriculum innovation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The management of the Foundation Stage is excellent, and through skilful and imaginative teaching, children develop excellent learning skills. Good induction systems help children settle quickly and get a good start to their schooling, something that parents appreciate. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and many children exceed the expected levels by the time they move into Year 1, particularly in their personal development. They also make excellent progress in their knowledge of letters and their sounds (phonics). Excellent curriculum planning carefully integrates all aspects of learning into the topics and themes followed each week. Children's creative development is catered for well. There are many planned and unplanned opportunities through independent play and more formal activities supported by adults. These enable children to show initiative and develop confidence and support their excellent behaviour and attitudes. Improvements to the outdoor provision allow children to make good use of these at all times but the facilities do not yet allow a free-flow arrangement between classroom and outdoor activities. Excellent recording and tracking systems enable teachers and teaching assistants to extend children's skills and understanding. The system for recording the daily achievements of the children feed through well into very precise planning for individual needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide further opportunities for pupils to take part in investigative and exploratory learning.
- Revise planning and teaching approaches to allow pupils a greater say in the choice of the topics they study and the methods used.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 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	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	1

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?	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?	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	1
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	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	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

7 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Prettygate Infant School, Colchester, CO3 4PH

Many of you will remember when I visited your school a little while ago. I was very impressed by your warm welcome, and your politeness. You are a credit to yourselves and the school - well done. All of you that I talked with were very keen to share your work and ideas. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

You go to a good school and all of the adults take great care of you. Many of you also work hard for your school and the children who go there. I particularly liked the work of the playground friends and the school council. You told me how much you enjoy school, and how you like to work hard and try your best. I could see this in your books and the displays of your work on the walls. I particularly liked your dinosaur booklets with their clever computer pictures. You also told me that everyone in school gets on with each other. I could see this by the way you play well together, pay attention in lessons and help each other in class and around school. You behave really well. Your action song in assembly was super and I felt cheerful all day after listening to you.

To help you do even better, I have asked the teachers to plan for more times when you can investigate and experiment in your work so more lessons are like your 'discovery afternoons'. I have also asked them to let you have some opportunities to plan for yourselves about what you want to find out in some of your lessons.

I wish you well for the future and hope you continue to work hard and get even better.

John Francis

Lead inspector