

Pear Tree Mead Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114994
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311782
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Martyn Skinner

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	266
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Burton
Headteacher	Mrs Chris Thurgood
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pear Tree Mead Trotters Road Harlow Essex CM18 7DA

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Inspection number	311782

Telephone number
Fax number

01279 836181
01279 423504

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	10-11 December 2008
Inspection number	311782

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pear Tree Mead Primary and Nursery School is a slightly larger than average sized primary school in an area of social disadvantage in Harlow. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

The school has recently been awarded the Sport England Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that provides good support for the personal development of all children. Unsettled staffing in the recent history of the school has made it difficult to keep a clear focus on raising standards. The new headteacher, supported by a skilled senior team and a committed governing body, has taken a strong lead in raising expectations and establishing important systems to move the school on. The impact of these improvements so far shows that the school is securely placed to improve further. As one parent commented, 'The school has moved onwards and upwards.'

Children settle quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), where they make steady progress from their below expected starting points. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in the rest of the school and, by the end of Year 6, standards remain below average overall. Progress in mathematics is less secure than that in English and staff are taking decisive action to address this area of relative weakness.

There are positive features in teaching across the school. Teachers are hard-working and enthusiastic and, as one pupil rightly said, 'They make learning fun.' Teachers maintain positive relationships with pupils. They plan carefully for lessons, but do not always pitch work at the right level for all pupils and this sometimes slows the pace of learning. Teachers help children to make connections in their learning through many carefully planned skills-based lessons.

Pupils enjoy school and are rightly pleased with the good care provided by members of staff. The school works well with others to ensure that all pupils, including those who are more vulnerable, are well cared for. Pupils become safety-conscious, healthy and happy learners who mostly behave well and are confident when talking to adults. They are keen to take responsibility and they do so well, seen for example in the enthusiasm of older pupils to volunteer for the role of 'Play Leader' in the Key Stage 1 playground. Personal development is good overall, but opportunities for cultural development are rather limited, particularly in terms of mixing with children from different backgrounds. In this respect, the school's promotion of community cohesion is also a little limited. Pupils demonstrate a good work ethic and are satisfactorily prepared for success in their future lives.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's clear focus on raising standards has been effectively communicated to all staff. Senior leaders, a number of whom have only recently been appointed, are moving the school forward but the impact of new initiatives cannot yet be fully measured. Recent signs of increasing rates of progress demonstrate that there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is satisfactory with some good features. Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age. A good mix of child initiated activities and focused teaching, often in small groups, enables children to make satisfactory progress. By the end of the Reception year standards have improved although they remain below average especially in communication, language and literacy. Children enjoy the wide range of activities provided and these ensure good opportunities for imaginative play and creative learning. The covered outdoor area ensures that there are opportunities to extend learning all year round. The indoor classroom is well organised around the EYFS

curriculum with specific areas in each classroom to help children explore all areas of learning. Knowledgeable teachers and support staff plan as a team to provide opportunities for children across both classes to enjoy working together, for example in producing a Nativity play. The school is rightly keen to develop more of these joint initiatives. Transitions into Reception and then into Year 1 are sensitively managed and children make a number of visits to their new classrooms to prepare them for these changes. All staff are strongly committed to meeting the pastoral needs of each child, with the result that personal development is good. The recently introduced 'Key Person' system of supporting children along with a new approach to checking children's learning is enabling staff to develop a more detailed knowledge of each child's progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory, although there is not currently a designated early years practitioner leading the EYFS. This limits the scope and impact of future developments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff work together to bring about a rapid improvement in standards, particularly in mathematics.
- Share best practice to ensure that teaching is consistently good or better, providing appropriate challenge for all pupils and making sure they know how to improve their work.
- Provide more opportunities for cultural development by enabling pupils to mix with children from different backgrounds.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' progress has, in the recent past, varied and has not always been satisfactory. A number of pupils have underachieved. However, improvements to teaching and systems for tracking pupils' progress have ensured that pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The evidence for this is seen in the school's own detailed performance data and in the unvalidated Key Stage 2 test results for 2008. There have been some encouraging signs of improvement in English, but standards in mathematics remain a relative weakness. Pupils who find learning difficult make satisfactory progress because of well targeted and effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They demonstrate positive attitudes towards each other and towards staff. Pupils seize many opportunities for sport and exercise, showing a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. They are keen to participate in an excellent range of activities at break and lunchtimes, making the most of adventure play equipment, puppets and costumes for role-play. The school council has played an important role in improving playtimes, with one pupil proudly commenting, 'We make the school a better place.' Pupils take on a range of responsibilities in the school and are involved in regular fundraising for charity. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils understand right from wrong because of the school's strong code of conduct, constantly reinforced by staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory,

with insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures other than their own. The school has worked hard to ensure that attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, teachers are enthusiastic and they manage pupils' behaviour well. They plan interesting activities and engage the pupils' interest successfully by using a variety of styles and techniques. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult. However, teachers do not always ensure that work provides the right levels of challenge for all pupils. This means that there are occasions when work is either too hard or too easy for some pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently but they do not always give them clear enough guidance by identifying how they could improve, especially in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is carefully reviewing all areas of the curriculum. In English, exciting initiatives have led to improvements in boys' writing skills. A similar focus in mathematics is showing early signs of improving the progress made by pupils, especially in problem solving. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly. However, rather limited use is made of these resources in other subject areas to help extend pupils' research and literacy skills. Links between subjects are developed to make lessons more interesting for pupils. An emphasis on an 'experiences' approach to the curriculum which focuses on key skills has resulted in high levels of enjoyment and engagement. In Years 3 and 4 a classroom debate about a local airport has effectively linked mathematics, geography, history, design technology and science. This type of thematic approach captures the pupils' imaginations and makes learning more meaningful. An interesting range of after school activities, visits and visitors to the school extend learning beyond the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a welcoming and caring environment. All pupils are valued and all staff show a strong commitment to their support. Learning mentors play a valuable role in giving careful guidance to pupils who need their help. Pupils are confident to discuss worries with staff and they have many opportunities to do this. The school is effective in managing procedures for child protection and health and safety. Induction of new pupils and the transfer to the secondary schools is carefully organised. Teachers thoroughly assess pupils' work and put in place appropriate interventions to meet identified needs. The school makes very good use of outside agencies to extend the support provided for pupils. Academic guidance is not as strong as pastoral care. Targets for literacy and numeracy are set for groups of pupils in all classes to help them make progress. However, pupils do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of how well they are doing or how to improve their work to make better than satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In the short time since her appointment, the headteacher has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving pupils' progress and raising standards. She has introduced strategies and initiatives which are beginning to make a difference. In this, she is well supported by her senior leadership team. There is now a realistic assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In this respect, the work of leaders and managers, including governors, has been effective. More comprehensive and better use of performance data enables all teachers and managers to track pupils' progress carefully and plan intervention strategies for pupils at risk of underachievement. However, there has not yet been sufficient time for the full impact of these improvements to be measured. Also, although leaders show a good commitment to challenging discrimination, plans to help pupils form friendships with children from different backgrounds have not yet been fully implemented. Some parents have expressed concern over the lack of opportunities to meet and share ideas with the new headteacher. This is being addressed as a matter of priority.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pear Tree Mead Primary and Nursery School, Harlow CM18 7BY

Thank you very much for the way you helped us with the inspection of your school. You were very friendly and gave us a lot of ideas about what you like about school. We especially enjoyed meeting with the school council and finding out how you share your ideas to make your school better.

You told us how much you enjoy being at school and we could see that from your smiles! We have judged Pear Tree Mead to be a satisfactory school where you are being well looked after. As a result of the good care you receive, you feel happy and behave well. Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you make better progress and they have already introduced some new ideas to make your learning even more enjoyable.

So that the school can carry on getting better, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- work together to help you do better in your work, particularly in mathematics
- make sure that all work is at the right level for you and that you know how to take the next steps in your learning
- help you understand more about other cultures by meeting children from different backgrounds to your own.

I hope that you carry on behaving well and helping to improve your school. Yours sincerely,

Martyn Skinner

Lead inspector