

Portsdown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116258
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	312235
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI

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	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Morton
Headteacher	Mrs Irene Baldry
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Sundridge Close Wymering Cosham Portsmouth PO6 3JL
Telephone number	02392 378991
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is much higher than average. A very high proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. A high number of pupils move in and out of the school each year. Within the school is a small local authority Nurture and Assessment unit for younger children. There is a local authority nursery sharing the same site as the school adjacent to a children's centre, which is currently being built.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Portsdown is a rapidly improving school with many strengths. The school is providing a satisfactory standard of education. This is because of the leadership and management's highly effective and single-minded approach to tackling a wide range of significant challenges that have faced the school in the last three years. Because of these issues, standards in recent years were below average. It is only very recently that the benefits of the school's effective coaching of teachers, tracking all pupils and accelerated catch-up activities, have begun to have impact, especially in Key Stage 2.

Leadership and management, well supported by the governing body, have relentlessly improved the quality of teaching. As a result, there has been a rapid increase in pupils' progress and the quality of teaching but there are still patches of inconsistent practice across the school. For example, there is now a higher proportion of good to outstanding teaching, but because of the mainly satisfactory teaching in Years 3 and 4 the quality is satisfactory overall. This is hindering the progress of a significant minority of pupils. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics by the age of seven. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are also making good progress and a significant proportion of them are in line with the expectations for their age in English and mathematics. In their final year at the school, many more pupils are now working at nationally expected standards than in previous years. In spite of better progress, standards remain below average at the end of KS2 because of the legacy of underachievement.

The good personal development and well-being of pupils is an area of strength. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behaviour is good both within and beyond the classroom and they understand the importance of behaving courteously. Relationships in the school between pupils and between pupils and adults are warm and friendly. The pupils' role in having a say about what goes on in the school is positively encouraged through the strong development of the school council.

The curriculum is good. The school offers a broad, balanced and relevant range of subjects, which are adapted to meet the social, emotional and learning needs of most pupils. Staff work hard to excite and stimulate pupils with well-planned, practical activities which promote a sense of enjoyment. Good use is made of laptops in classrooms. This encourages pupils to access research material to support their learning. The school offers good opportunities for extended services through breakfast clubs, the after school activities such as the 'SAM' club and holiday activities.

Care, guidance and support is good. The school provides a safe, caring and secure learning environment. There are effective support strategies, which make sure that all pupils are cared for and encouraged to feel safe. The school promotes the good work of the welfare assistant who fosters stronger links between the school, families and other agencies. Effective links with families and outside agencies have contributed to the increased attendance of most pupils. Targets for future learning in reading, writing and mathematics have been introduced fairly recently and are beginning to have an impact on pupil progress.

Leadership and management is good. Since the arrival of the current headteacher, there has been an indefatigable approach to developing a strong emphasis on pupils' emotional and social well-being. The leadership team and governors work well together and know their school

well. There has been effective progress since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue the improvements already made.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Strong leadership and management in the Foundation Stage ensure that provision is good. The coordinator is currently playing a leading role in significant developments. The local authority's nursery provision and the school's Reception class are being forged into a cohesive Foundation Stage. Children start in the Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding well below those expected for this age. Most have particularly weak language skills and limited knowledge and understanding of the world. Because of good teaching and learning and a broad, interesting curriculum all the children achieve well. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage, standards are slightly below average. All the children are well cared for, guided and supported. Personal development is particularly good. Children are well behaved and despite their limited language skills, most are confident and friendly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that all teaching challenges pupils to achieve as well as they can.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory 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

2007 saw the results of the strong leadership and good teaching bring pupils' standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics into line with the national average following a significant upward trend in Key Stage 1. The trend of improvement in Key Stage 2 has been much slower because of the significant amount of additional learning required by most pupils. There has been slight improvement in standards since 2004 although they were still below the national average in 2007. Since then, the leadership's strategic decision to sharpen the focus on improving the rate of pupils' progress in Year 5 and 6 even further has paid off. The school's accurate and rigorous assessment information and work in lessons seen, indicates that the pupils in upper Key Stage 2 are making significant and rapid progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has an effective system for pupils to work with learning mentors and be supported by playground buddies. Pupils feel safe and confident in asking for help and support from adults and other pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy their learning. Many are effective independent learners. A good example of this is the role-play sessions in which pupils improve their use of imaginative language. Attendance levels are below average. However, the school has worked hard with outside agencies to improve the situation. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and respond positively to healthy eating initiatives. Pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills enables them to make satisfactory progress that will contribute to their future economic

well-being. Pupils contribute very well to the community. Fund raising activities have raised funds for equipment in an adventure playground. Last year the pupils were involved in Rock Challenge and linked this to the development of healthy eating through the ages.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1 is good overall because of the exciting, and sometimes outstanding, practice and innovative strategies. These have raised standards and enthused pupils in their learning. Many teachers demonstrate exemplary behaviour management strategies and have high expectations of children's work and behaviour. There is a wider range of inconsistent teaching in Key Stage 2 but the school is already tackling this effectively. Where teaching is good, pupils' progress accelerates. This is because of well-planned and practical lessons, which match the learning needs of all pupils. The outstanding teaching motivates and enthuses pupils by supporting them in understanding what they need to do to improve through clear and achievable targets. Effective assessment systems and procedures inform teachers how to challenge pupils' learning and support better progress. For example, work marked with different coloured highlighter pens indicate to pupils where they are being successful and where they need to improve. In lower Key Stage 2, where there is a higher proportion of less effective teaching, activities do not meet the learning needs of pupils. At the beginning of lessons, teachers take too long to introduce activities, which leads to pupils becoming disinterested and restless.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff have successfully developed the curriculum over recent years. All the required elements are covered in distinct lessons and diverse topics, which link different subjects well. As part of their design technology project, older pupils particularly enjoy building vehicles to ride and race in. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are very motivated and engaged in work around a mysterious girl from the middle ages called 'Marion'. The curriculum is broadly successful in adapting to most pupils' needs. The grouping by ability for English and mathematics supports most pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 but there is insufficient variation of work in Years 3 and 4. Special events such as visits and visitors, clubs and even a sleepover for pupils in Year 3 and 4, successfully add to social cohesion, achievement and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety are established and secure. A nurture unit in the school effectively supports some vulnerable young children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and disabilities are cared for and supported well. They are generally happy, well behaved and confident. Their achievement is in line with their peers. Parents and families are well supported and helped to care for their children effectively at home. These are clearly displayed targets in each classroom. These are used to good effect throughout Key Stage 1, less so in lower Key Stage 2 but highly effectively in years 5 and 6. Pupils report that they find these helpful for example, one boy said 'they set you something to achieve and then you can achieve it'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Over the last three years, there has been a careful, considered and strategic approach to improving the school. The headteacher, ably supported by her leadership team, has been single-minded in overcoming many significant difficulties. In addition to raising standards and improving teaching, a key priority for the school is a relentless and persistent focus on the effective support of all pupils' social and emotional needs. There is a strong sense of camaraderie amongst the staff who work well together as a team. The leadership team has developed accurate and effective self-evaluation and as a result, has a clear view of the school's priorities. The highly supportive governing body are well aware of what the school does well and where it needs to go next. There are ambitious and challenging targets for all pupils based on good monitoring and evaluation of their progress and an effective, flexible approach to placing additional support where needed. The school has worked hard to engage with parents who provide a high level of support.

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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?	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 disabilities make progress	3

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	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	3

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

30 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Portsdown Primary School, Portsmouth, PO6 3JL

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed, talking with you, seeing your lessons and watching the digital photographs of you in the school foyer.

We think that there are lots of good things about your school. Because your headteacher and staff know the school well and work hard to make improvements it is getting better and better all the time. However, lessons, particularly in the middle part of the school, are not always as good as they could be and do not always help you all to learn as much as you could. Your headteacher is aware of where things need improving and is working hard to improve them. Your behaviour, attitudes and the way you get on with each other is good. We particularly like the way some of you are rewriting the school prospectus. The adults care and support you all very well. The school does lots of things to help you and your families.

We have asked your teachers to improve two things about the school. The first is to improve teaching and learning. The second is to ensure that you all can do and know even more things by the time you leave Year 6.

Perhaps you can help by telling your teachers when teaching is particularly helpful and by continuing to work as hard as you can.

Once again many thanks. Best wishes to you and your families.

John Seal

Her Majesty's Inspector