

# Potters Gate CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125161
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	315174
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Stephens

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ben Linscott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jane Whittington
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Potters Gate Farnham GU9 7BB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01252 715619
<b>Fax number</b>	01252 718165

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils in this smaller than average primary school come from a variety of backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is average. There are fewer pupils with English as an additional language than in most schools but the number is increasing. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The headteacher and her deputy were appointed in 2005. After a period of turbulence, staffing is now stable. The school has been awarded the Activemark. The school employs a home-link worker who also manages the attached Children's Centre.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Potters Gate is a good school. In three years, the headteacher, very well supported by her deputy, has created an ethos conducive to learning, in which all staff focus on accelerating progress and raising standards. In recent years and prior to the appointment of the current headteacher and deputy, there was a period of considerable staff turnover that had a negative impact on how well pupils in some year groups learned. Staffing has now been stable for two years and this is reflected in the common sense of purpose that pervades the school. Parents are almost unanimous in their praise. 'The leadership is excellent, there is a very strong sense of direction and belonging and a sense of pride at being part of Potters Gate.' Another said 'We are very happy with all the improvements and totally support all the hard work all the staff have and continue to put in'. The school, with the very good support of the Children's Centre manager, has established excellent relationships with agencies that offer practical advice and support and also with parents, to promote pupils' well-being.

National tests in 2007 indicated below average standards at the end of Year 6 and slow progress over time. In fact these pupils made good progress in their final year but insufficient to make up for the legacy of underachievement. The current Year 6 has had longer to recover lost ground. This is reflected in good achievement and above average standards confirmed by discussions with pupils, scrutiny of their work and analysis of school records. Achievement in writing and reading is good. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory because pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply and consolidate the skills they are taught. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 also achieve well and especially in reading where all pupils attained their challenging targets, many at a higher level. The number attaining the higher levels in mathematics and writing is increasing but not at a fast enough rate. The Foundation Stage ensures a secure start for the children in all areas of learning and they make good progress.

Aspects of pupils' personal development are strengths of the school. They are keen to attend because they enjoy it so much although a small but significant minority of parents still remove pupils during term time for holidays. Pupils are polite, confident and caring of each other. Their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy life style is outstanding as is their behaviour. They are proud of their school and anxious to do well. All adults listen very carefully to what the pupils have to say and value the work that they produce. The good curriculum supports pupils well in their learning. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to be involved in planning their learning, assessing progress and applying the skills they are taught in a range of real and wider contexts.

Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are outstanding. They are secure, well known and rigorously applied. Pupils' progress is tracked well, keeping both teachers and the senior management team well informed of progress. Consequently, if progress falters, additional support is arranged quickly, for maximum impact. Books are marked well and pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve further. Too often, however, there is no evidence of a response to the teacher's comments where one is requested.

Leadership and management are good. The senior management team has galvanised the staff into an effective and hardworking team that support each other well. All understand their roles and have the opportunity to contribute to the school's short and longer term aims. They seize the many opportunities available for further professional development and this in turn strengthens their roles within the school. The senior management team is not complacent and

plans to develop the management skills of middle managers are in hand. Governors hold the headteacher to account for the standards attained because they have become more rigorous in their role as critical friends.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of abilities but overall these are in line with national expectations. They make good progress in all areas of learning. Starting points in thinking, writing and calculation skills are lower but these improve because children benefit from a well-organised curriculum, good teaching and rigorous assessment. Staff provide a good balance between adult led activities and opportunities for children to explore for themselves. Occasionally, opportunities to enhance learning through interacting with children are lost when adults focus too much on one activity. Opportunities are created for children to use wheeled vehicles and to jump and climb, although these activities are not available on demand. The covered outdoor learning environment is fully exploited and children are proud to describe how they grow their own fruit and vegetables. There is a strong emphasis on personal development. Consequently, children are happy and confident to choose what they want to do while showing a good understanding of what is expected. The teaching of letter sounds and opportunities for role-play, successfully support the development of children's communication skills. Very good relationships are established with parents and carers from the start. Arrangements to admit children to school are comprehensive with home visits, visits to nurseries and school arranged. There are good arrangements to ensure a smooth transition from the Foundation Stage into Year 1.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Provide more opportunities for pupils throughout the school to apply their mathematical skills by solving problems in a range of contexts.
- Involve pupils more in planning and organising their own learning in subjects across the curriculum and assessing their own progress in a range of real and wider contexts.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The majority of pupils, irrespective of gender and including those who need additional support with aspects of literacy and mathematics and those who speak English as an additional language, now achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. Progress is accelerating throughout the school because teachers track the progress of individuals and groups well and now respond quickly and effectively if additional support and guidance is required. Parents have also responded well to advice and now support their children effectively at home. Pupils enter Year 1 with levels of knowledge and skills that are securely in line with those expected for their age. Far more are now attaining the higher levels in reading by the end of Year 2 and the challenging targets set for writing and mathematics were just exceeded in national assessments this year. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has also improved. Pupils have made good progress in writing and high standards have been maintained in reading and science. Standards in mathematics are just above average but will improve further if pupils are given more opportunities to apply the skills taught to solve problems.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They work hard, have positive attitudes and high self-esteem because staff value their efforts and are quick to praise and reward them for their achievements. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a keen sense of community in their care and thought for others both in school and in the wider community. The oldest pupils play a significant and effective role in supporting the work of the school by taking on responsibilities. The involvement of younger pupils is less well defined. Pupils have an outstanding awareness of safety. They feel very secure and safe from bullying, are extremely considerate of each other and talk confidently about how to avoid risks. The school has emphasised the importance of good diet and plenty of exercise, consequently, pupils' understanding of a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. Attendance is satisfactory. It is improving because an appropriate range of strategies has been implemented, including the effective use of the home-school link worker, that has met with some success. However, a minority of pupils are still absent from school for significant periods at certain times during the year.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the tasks set and work hard to accomplish them successfully. They listen well and respond sensibly to questions that frequently challenge them to explain and justify their thinking. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully and ensure that work matches their needs. Sometimes opportunities for pupils to apply the skills taught in mathematics are not exploited. Clear learning objectives ensure that pupils know what teachers expect of them at the end of the lesson. This enables teachers to assess pupils' progress and identify aspects of work that need consolidating. Teaching assistants offer good support. They know the pupils well and ensure that those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging understand what is taught. Pupils with English as an additional language respond well to praise and encouragement, make good progress and are fully included in all activities. Resources are well prepared and used well to motivate the pupils and encourage discussion.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is carefully planned to interest and meet the needs of all pupils, including those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging. As one Year 2 pupil said 'It is never boring at school'. The development of key skills in English, and information and communication technology are a strength. However, there are too few opportunities to apply these skills in real contexts. Educational visits and visitors contribute well to pupils' knowledge and understanding. The residential visit to Portsmouth is a favourite with Year 6. One pupil said, 'It was great fun and we learnt to work as a team'. The curriculum is further strengthened by a wide variety of extra curricular activities. The school is in the process of reviewing aspects of the curriculum. It has rightly highlighted the need to strengthen cross-curricular links, allow the pupils to have a greater say in their own learning and to ensure pupils have more opportunity to apply and assess their skills in real and wider contexts.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support is a particular strength in this nurturing school. Parents appreciate and acknowledge the strong sense of community that has developed. One commented 'Potters Gate is a wonderful school which combines high quality teaching and management with first rate pastoral care'. With the effective support of the home-school link worker, there is diligent care for vulnerable children and those who have social or emotional needs. Procedures to support pupils who need additional support with their learning and those with English as an additional language are secure. The school works very successfully to involve parents and keeps them very well informed by personal contact, newsletters, homework information and opportunities for family learning. Academic guidance is good. All pupils' progress is tracked termly and teachers use this information to set challenging targets for improvement in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers assess progress towards achieving those targets in their marking. The school recognizes the need to ensure this is fully embedded in mathematics. Pupils know their targets but are not as fully involved as they might be in assessing and recording progress towards them by responding to teachers' written comments.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher, well supported by her deputy, provides confident and decisive leadership. As a result, all staff share a determination to raise standards and accelerate progress. Subject leaders talk confidently about standards in their subjects because they are given time to monitor lessons, review planning and scrutinise books. They interview pupils and keep the headteacher well informed of the progress that pupils make. Consequently, the headteacher can organise remedial action if required and monitor its impact. Plans are in hand to further empower middle managers and to make them an integral part of the strategic planning process. Teachers feel empowered and know that their ideas and suggestions are valued. They are involved in reviewing and amending the school development plan. This team spirit together with rigorous monitoring underpins the recent improvements in teaching and learning that are driving up standards. Governors hold the school to account well. They are well organised and monitor standards and progress. They are currently reviewing patterns of organisation to share responsibilities more widely.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

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

15 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Potters Gate CofE Primary School, Farnham, GU9 7BB

Thank you for being so welcoming, polite and friendly when we came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you and looking at all your work and the exciting things that you do.

You go to a good school. Here is a list of some of the things we liked best.

- You are very polite and caring of each other and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You work hard and are making good progress in your work.
- Your teachers are good at planning interesting lessons and making sure that the work is not too difficult and not too hard.
- All the adults in your school make sure you are really well looked after.
- Your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are doing a good job.

Every school, even one as good as yours, has things that could be improved. We think your teachers need to give you more opportunities to use your mathematical knowledge and understanding to solve real problems. This will help you understand just how useful mathematics can be. We also think teachers need to talk to you even more about the work they are planning for you to do because we think you can help with your own ideas and suggestions. This will make your work even more interesting and you can use all your skills to do really well and see for yourselves that you are making even better progress.

Yours sincerely

Graham Stephens

Lead Inspector