

Plaistow and Kirdford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125848
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315325
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	175
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Gillians
Headteacher	Steven Potter
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Plaistow Billingshurst RH14 0PX
Telephone number	01403 871275
Fax number	01403 871470

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a little smaller than average. Pupil numbers have risen steadily since the last inspection as the school has been gradually making the transition from having less than 20 to around 30 in every year group. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, of those, an unusually high number are identified as being dyslexic. Almost all of the pupils are of white British heritage.

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. An archway at the entrance to the school bears a welcome message that introduces Plaistow and Kirdford as a place 'where we love to learn, look after each other and have fun'. The child who came up with this slogan certainly summed the school up accurately.

The headteacher, school leaders and governors have forged a very strong partnership with the school's very supportive parents to provide pupils with resources which are especially impressive for a school of this size. Outdoor facilities, including an extensive 'activity trail', a climbing wall, and decked and covered areas, extend opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. The 'forest school' outside instils a sense of adventure and discovery among the youngest children. Pupils' great enjoyment of school and of learning also flows from the creative way in which different subjects are linked together to make learning relevant and fun. It is the resources and curriculum which stand out in this school and which have helped pupils to develop a genuine love of learning with a growing confidence and maturity.

Parents especially praise the way staff and pupils all know each other and get on so very well together. As one put it, 'My child is a name and not a number'. Many describe their children as having flourished at this school. Relationships are excellent; pupils treat each other with care and respect and their behaviour is exemplary. They are very attentive in lessons and they work with concentration and sustained effort. They are made to feel safe because the school takes care to look after their welfare, providing particularly effective support for the relatively high number of pupils identified as being dyslexic.

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards in Year 6 are above average overall, although there is some variation from year to year owing to the relatively small size of year groups. Standards in the Year 2 assessments have not generally been as high as they should be given the great start the children get off to in the Reception Year. School leaders have responded well to this by introducing new initiatives across the school, including 'Big Writing' which is helping to focus pupils' very strong speaking and listening skills into equally expressive writing. Standards are rising as a result and pupils are now making good progress across the school. Pupils now have a clearer picture of how they are doing and of what they need to do better, although marking does not always give them enough push to improve their spelling and punctuation.

Pupils confirm their teachers' success in what they describe as 'making learning fun' through well-planned practical activities. Teachers plan their lessons with work that is generally matched to pupils' different capabilities. However, they still sometimes expect too little of some pupils and when this happens it limits the progress that pupils make.

The headteacher's and other leaders' drive in equipping the school and creating such a stimulating learning environment is strongly valued by parents and pupils alike. Along with the recent changes to the curriculum, these show the school's good capacity for further improvement. School leaders have a mostly accurate picture of how well the school is doing, although their monitoring of lessons does not always focus enough on pupils' learning and the progress that they are making.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'My daughter is always excited about school. She is motivated, interested, learning and happy. What more could a parent ask for?' These comments from a parent are typical of the positive

view that parents have of the start their children get in the Reception Year. Children start school with skills and capabilities above those expected nationally. They make good progress in all areas of learning and achieve standards by the end of the Reception Year that are significantly above average. This is because staff have very high expectations of what the children can do, and the children rise to the challenge. For example, four year olds are already developing the confidence to look out for and correct sentences that do not start with a capital letter or end with a full stop. Children quickly learn the school's orderly routines and work and play together very well. They enjoy the stimulating classroom environment, although their outside play area has become rather tired-looking and is in need of refurbishment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can do so that all pupils are set challenging work in lessons.
- Ensure that when school leaders monitor lessons they focus on the progress and learning of the pupils.
- Give pupils more guidance through marking to improve the technical accuracy of their writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in the Year 6 national tests have fluctuated from year to year, owing to the relatively small number of pupils in each year group. Standards were average in 2007 and that represented satisfactory progress but progress has improved in the current year. With the success of initiatives such as 'Big Writing' and a new scheme for teaching mathematics, and with improved tracking of individual pupils' progress, standards are on the rise and they are now above average in Year 6. Pupils are generally achieving well in lessons, although they make slower progress than they could when they are not set challenging enough work. This has been most evident in Years 1 and 2, where pupils have not been helped enough in the past to capitalise on the very good start they get off to in the Foundation Stage and make the progress they should. The many dyslexic pupils make good progress because they benefit from support that is carefully tailored to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and attendance is good. Pupils are polite, helpful and friendly, showing they have taken the school's motto of 'care, respect and responsibility' fully on board. They are keen to do well and work hard. Pupils have an exceedingly good understanding of how to lead healthy lives, and large numbers take part in at least one extra-curricular sporting activity. They make the most of break and lunchtime to take part in energetic activities. Packed lunches are healthy and pupils grow and eat their own vegetables in the allotments that each class has. Pupils are very safety conscious and enthusiastically attend first aid courses.

Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the community. Older pupils are keen to help the younger ones and they happily look after the chickens kept throughout the year and the lambs that gambol in the spring. School council members take their responsibilities seriously and influence what happens in school. Pupils make the most of opportunities to show their initiative and confidence by having their say through the school's 'Moodle' website. The standards achieved, pupils' enthusiasm for learning, and periodic

opportunities for enterprise, such as the upcoming 'Apprentice: You're Hired!' project, all help to prepare pupils well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan interesting and enjoyable activities that motivate the pupils to work hard and do their best. Many activities are exciting and require pupils to be creative. Work is generally matched well to pupils' abilities, although sometimes not enough is expected of some pupils and this slows their progress. Teachers frequently engage pupils in activities which make them think about world issues and successfully develop their speaking and listening skills.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Consequently, pupils feel confident to 'have a go', knowing that teachers will value their contributions even if they are wrong.

Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with dyslexia and, as a result, they do well. Teachers create an interesting and stimulating learning environment which values pupils' work and supports them in their learning. In many lessons, pupils have the chance to assess their own and others' work against clear success criteria. They enjoy this and do it well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a particularly vibrant and stimulating curriculum which results in very well motivated pupils who develop a love of learning. The current focus on raising standards through the 'Big Writing' initiative is ensuring that pupils write creatively and enthusiastically. Other subjects are planned very effectively through themed topics in each year group. These cover a broad range and often enable pupils to learn through first-hand experience. For example, during the inspection, Year 3 pupils were dressed in Japanese national costume and ate Japanese food as part of their topic. Year 5 pupils studying mountains spoke excitedly about their recent 'mountaineering' expedition to the 'K2' sports centre, where they conquered the five metre climbing wall. Pupils' speaking skills are developed through lively debates on environmental and global issues. The range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is extensive. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the 'Forest School' activities and the chance to look after chickens and lambs. These have become such an established feature that the school is building a set of discrete racks for all the Wellington boots!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel safe and secure and where adults are approachable and helpful. 'They're more like our friends', said one pupil. Rare incidents of bullying are taken seriously and dealt with effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure. Very effective transition procedures ensure Reception pupils quickly settle in and that Year 6 pupils are confident about their impending move to secondary school. Teachers and teaching assistants are very supportive of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress ensure that those who are not making expected progress are quickly identified and targeted for additional support, but the school's new system for tracking progress does not currently give accurate enough projections of the standards that pupils should be expected to reach by

the end of Year 6. Pupils know their individual targets and how to improve, although the marking of their work varies in quality. Much gives helpful guidance to pupils that tells them how to improve their work, but not enough emphasis is placed on correcting grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, school leaders and governors have succeeded in creating an exciting learning environment where pupils are keen to learn and do well. They have not previously been as effective in ensuring consistently high standards; pupils have not in the past made as much progress as they should, particularly in Years 1 and 2. School leaders have been effective, however, in introducing new schemes to accelerate rates of progress this year, most notably in writing and mathematics, where the lead taken in developing stimulating opportunities for pupils to build on and develop their skills has had a demonstrable impact. As a result, pupils are now achieving well throughout the school. School leaders' monitoring of lessons places more focus on the features of teaching than on its impact on pupils' progress. This sometimes leaves leaders with an overly positive picture of teaching and learning, and so is less helpful in identifying for staff how their teaching could be even better.

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 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	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?	1
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	3
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Plaistow and Kirdford Primary School, Billingshurst, RH14 0PX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Many of you and your parents told us what a good school you have and you are right! You really enjoy school because the headteacher and other school leaders have been so successful in working with your parents to create such an exciting place for you to learn in. What a fantastic range of outdoor activities you have! I am sorry I did not get a chance to taste some of the vegetables you have been growing in your allotments.

We were impressed with the way teachers make learning interesting and fun through all the topics you do. Teachers and other staff also look after you well, and that helps you feel so very happy and safe at school. You all get on very well together and your behaviour is exemplary. It was good to see how you all pay such careful attention in lessons to what your teacher and each other are saying, and how you work with concentration. Teachers are helping you to make good progress, particularly with the new schemes you have this year for writing and mathematics, but we have asked them to make sure that they are always setting you work that stretches you. The children in Reception are certainly all given challenging things to do. We have also asked the school to make sure that when teachers mark your work they help you more by correcting spelling and punctuation errors so that you can see what you have got wrong. It is good to see that your writing is so interesting and expressive, but if you make lots of spelling and punctuation mistakes then you will not do as well as you and your parents would like. You can help by taking note of how to make your work even better.

Yours is a well-run school, but we have asked school leaders to make sure that when they visit lessons they look not just at what the teachers are doing but especially closely at how teachers are helping all of you to learn and make progress.

Best wishes Selwyn Ward Lead inspector

22 March 2008



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OPX**

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Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector