

Old Town First School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131694
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	315853
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Brenda Spencer

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Bulteel
Headteacher	Gill Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Green Road Poole BH15 1QB
Telephone number	01202 673966
Fax number	01202 673966

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- How effectively teaching contributes to pupils' academic and personal achievements
- The extent of pupils' understanding of cultural diversity
- How well the systems for keeping the school under review inform the plans for improvement.

The inspector gathered evidence from observing lessons, having discussions with staff, chair of governors and pupils, gaining the views of parents, examining the school's records of checks on the quality of its work, and tracking pupils' progress and looking at their work. 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 by its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

On the school site there is additional provision of full-day and sessional care and crèche facilities. Extended services include adult learning courses in key skills and family learning programmes. Children's Centre status is scheduled for March 2008. The school is currently undergoing building works to accommodate increased pupil numbers in order to become two-form entry. This has been in progress for over two years. The school holds Investor in People award, Active Mark, Basic Skills Quality Mark award and has gained Healthy Schools status. Most pupils are of White British heritage but nearly a quarter of pupils are from other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils in school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Twelve pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school held in high regard by parents and pupils. One parent, reflecting the views of many others, commented that this is a school where 'children come first'. The success of the school is evident in the excellent progress made by pupils. From broadly average starting points in the Nursery, they reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are consistently high by the end of Year 3. Pupils are thriving academically and personally for very clear reasons. Leadership is excellent at all levels, providing clear direction and promoting high expectations. The school keeps its work under close review and constantly seeks to be better. Accurate identification of strengths and areas for improvement informs the well-targeted school plan for improvement. Staff give pupils outstanding academic and personal guidance. Everyone knows what is being done well and how each can do better. For example, feedback on teaching is highly constructive. Marking in books points out the way forward and pupils are very clear about what they need to do to succeed in lessons. The climate for learning is excellent. Everywhere the 'golden rules' are displayed and followed. Behaviour is excellent and, because the curriculum is so motivating, pupils are focused intently on whatever they are doing. The consistency in promoting this atmosphere throughout the school is an exemplary feature of the outstanding teaching. Scrupulous attention is given to each child's welfare and progress. All the necessary procedures are in place to safeguard pupils in a secure environment. Excellent support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as the school is quick to respond to need. In many cases these needs are successfully addressed in a relatively short space of time. The needs of the increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language are also carefully considered. Consequently, all groups of pupils achieve outstandingly well. The school is undergoing rapid change. The number and range of backgrounds of the pupils are increasing as the school moves to two-form entry. The protracted building works are a source of dissatisfaction to parents and staff. However, staff and governors embrace the change as an enrichment of their school and what it has to offer. The needs of the community are being carefully considered to ensure that the pupils continue to flourish. The wise financial decisions governors make about staffing and their deployment ensure resources are well matched to the pupils' needs. In addition, to ensure that governors are well placed to play their role in school leadership they value their own training and keep their effectiveness under regular review. This is of particular benefit to those governors who are relatively inexperienced. Pupils ultimately reach high standards in their academic and personal development because of the richness of the curriculum and the outstanding quality of teaching and care. Teachers' knowledge of key skills in literacy and numeracy is very strong so pupils make huge strides in their learning and are well set up for future success. The use of everyday assessment to plan the next steps in learning for each pupil is a significant factor in the high levels of achievement. While standards reached in mathematics are high, the school has identified that the provision for developing pupils' problem solving skills is not as well developed as other aspects. This rightly features as a key priority for the forthcoming year across the school. Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. The very strong links with other agencies ensure that what can be done for each pupil is done. In particular, the school uses these agencies extremely well to acquire specialist skills to support speech and language needs and pupils with English as an additional language. The partnership with parents to strengthen their contribution to their children's learning is highly effective and much valued. The school makes every effort to encourage parents to bring children to school every day that it is possible to do so, stressing the importance of regular attendance from the

Nursery onwards. The outstanding curriculum ensures pupils have an exceptionally good grounding in key skills and develop a sensitive understanding of their own needs and those of others, for example through Respect Week. The opportunities pupils have to shoulder responsibilities and contribute to the development of the school enable them to become well-rounded and valuable human beings. The school admirably lives up to its mission of being 'a caring school, valuing children as individuals and offering a wide range of good quality learning experiences which encourage them to fulfil their potential'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There are many excellent features in the good provision made for Nursery and Reception children. Children benefit from the careful balance of adult and child initiated activity so that they all make very good progress. However, building work means that the outside facilities for children in Nursery are currently limited, despite the school's best efforts to provide what they can under the circumstances. The children's attainment on entry is broadly average but some have weakly developed social and communication skills. The many opportunities provided to develop spoken language and cooperative play mean these children rapidly catch up with their peers. Children settle very quickly because relationships are so positive. Staff are exceptionally well skilled in helping children live up to the 'golden rules' so they quickly learn to behave very well and cooperate with one another. Working alongside the children, staff raise thought-provoking questions and encourage them to make decisions. As a result, children become resourceful and confident. Staff respond very well to children's interests and needs. The curriculum is made relevant to each child and all are to be found engrossed in their activities. Careful attention is also paid to supporting whole-school developments, for example developing boys' skills in writing. As part of this drive for improvement, there is a broad range of activities available to extend children's skills and control through using materials such as crayons, paintbrushes and playdough. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are well above average in nearly all respects. While knowledge of number and calculation is strong the children's ability to apply this to solving problems is less well developed. It is a mark of the very good checks on the school's effectiveness that this has been identified as a priority for improvement in the Foundation Stage as well as for other year groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in problem-solving activities.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
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?	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

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

18 October 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Old Town First School and Nursery, Poole, BH15 1QB Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to your school. I really enjoyed visiting your classes, looking at your work and talking to you. I am especially grateful to everyone who gave up time to talk to me over lunch break. Many of you told me that when you grew up you would like your children to go to a school like Old Town. The school deserves your high praise as it is outstanding. This is because the staff teach and care for you so well, the things you learn are just right for each one of you and your behaviour and enthusiasm mean you do very well. The people who run your school are constantly looking carefully to see how they can help the school go from strength to strength. They make excellent plans, put them into action and check to see if they have helped you to learn more and to become thoughtful, independent and hardworking. I could see that they are very successful indeed. You learn all the things you should, are considerate, energetic and enthusiastic. I hope you will all pat each other on the back for all your successes. There is one thing I have suggested needs to be done now. The staff are going to help you use all you know about numbers and calculating to solve real and everyday mathematical problems. I hope you will use all those thinking and independent skills you have developed to enjoy sorting out the mathematical puzzles you tackle. Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the many letters and responses to the questionnaire. These helped me to understand how well the school is doing. With best wishes, Brenda Spencer Lead inspector

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With best wishes,

Brenda Spencer
Lead inspector