

Prospect Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106071
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	324324
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft HMI

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)	262
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	Mrs Anne Thompson
Headteacher	Mr J Lawless
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Prospect Vale off Brown Lane Heald Green Cheadle Cheshire SK8 3RJ
Telephone number	0161 437 4226

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Inspection number	324324

Fax number

0161 498 8708

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This school of average size serves a residential area to the south west of Stockport. A fifth of its pupils come from the adjoining Manchester local authority area. Pupils join the Reception class with average attainment. Just over half the pupils are of White British heritage and 43% are from minority ethnic, largely Pakistani, heritage. Two fifths of pupils speak English as an additional language and this number is rising. The proportions of those eligible for free school meals and of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are below average. An Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) unit provides for children in the Nursery and Reception age range. The school has been awarded Investors in People, Extended School Status, the Activemark Standard for Physical Education, the Information and Communication Technology Mark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco-Award at silver level.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Prospect Vale Primary School is a good school with some outstanding features. It has improved steadily in recent years, dealing effectively with the points for further improvement identified in its last inspection. The headteacher and governors set great store on continuing improvement. They secure this through their high expectations for school performance, rigorous self-evaluation and action planning, and a proven ability to get results. The school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement. Given its modest budget and good performance, it gives excellent value for money.

Standards are above average and pupils make good progress throughout the school, exceptionally so in the EYFS. Pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. Teaching is good overall, with some outstanding and some satisfactory lessons seen. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good or better, the tasks set do not match the needs of pupils well enough and the pace of learning is slow. Assessment is carried out meticulously and pupils are very clear about how well they are doing. However, they are not made sufficiently clear about what they need to do to improve. The curriculum is broad and well balanced and staff are working with other schools to develop it further. However, some evidence was seen of teachers' planning leading to limited progress in learning from one year to the next. The school has a vibrant atmosphere for learning, to which staff and pupils contribute significantly. Relationships are very amicable. This underlies the school's excellent promotion of cultural awareness. Pupils are given care and guidance of a high quality. Behaviour is excellent and this helps pupils achieve the high levels of concentration and interest seen in most lessons. They respond well to the many opportunities to contribute to school and community life. These include: responsibilities in lessons; a scheme where nominated older pupils help younger ones during break times; within formal groups such as the eco-committee and the school council and by carrying out performances within the local community. Racial harmony is excellent in the school. Effective work is carried out with support from the local authority to help some parents learn English. This also helps them to learn about how the school system works for their children and how to support their learning at home. Through this, and especially the care taken to ensure that all pupils achieve well and get on with each other harmoniously, the school makes a first rate contribution to community cohesion. This is particularly valuable in an area whose ethnic mix is changing. Overall, parental satisfaction is very high.

The school is very well led by a highly committed and determined headteacher, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. They are clear about how the school should be developing. They plan assiduously for such development, taking good account of the views of pupils, parents and staff. Governors work with impressive efficiency and effectiveness, bringing to the school a wealth of relevant experience. They have an accurate picture of the school's performance. This is supported by clear and authoritative reports produced by the headteacher and regular contact with staff and pupils. This gives them an insight which enables them to provide the school with rigorous challenge, balanced by strong support. Financial management is meticulous. The school has saved and acquired funds to make the significant improvements to the premises which have improved the atmosphere for learning.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most children enter the EYFS with skills and knowledge that are broadly similar to children of this age, though a significant number starts school at the early stages of learning English. Children make outstanding progress during their time in the EYFS due to the consistent and highly effective teaching, excellent care and a very interesting curriculum. They make excellent progress towards the early learning goals and leave the Reception class with skills and knowledge above those expected for their age. Assessment by all staff is regular, frequent and informs future plans to meet children's needs. Learning time is well used. Children play enthusiastically together and explain their activities and choices to adults. Children are taught to take turns, have good manners and to develop good social, speaking and listening skills through the interesting activities. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated work. All learners become fully engaged in the activities, which are resourced to a very high standard. The brand new indoor learning environment is excellent and well equipped to meet learners' needs. The outdoor environment was not observed during the inspection as the children and staff had just moved into the refurbished area the day before the inspection. The school is set to complete the upgrading of its outdoor facilities forthwith. The welfare requirements of the EYFS standards are met fully. Children take appropriately 'safe' risks with their learning. Relationships with families are excellent and very supportive. Comprehensive transition arrangements are in place for children's entry to the EYFS. Entry into Year 1 is also coordinated very carefully and children have good opportunities to meet their new teacher and move smoothly into this next phase. The teachers in the EYFS work very hard to ensure the provision operates smoothly and successfully. They have an acute understanding of its strengths and admirable intentions to improve it further. The capacity to achieve such improvement is outstanding, as it is throughout the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate and improve further those aspects of teaching which lead to satisfactory rather than good learning.
- Ensure that planning to promote proper progress in learning between year groups is improved where it is currently restricted.
- Strengthen assessment procedures by enabling pupils to be clearer about how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and progress is at least good throughout the school. Pupils from minority ethnic groups who speak English as an additional language, make particularly good progress.

Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with levels of skills and knowledge which are above national age-related expectations. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress and standards achieved in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently above the national average. A slight dip in the teacher assessments in 2008 was partly due to the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Year 2. The school has put into place a number of effective strategies to support these pupils to raise their attainment in Key Stage 2. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 and attained standards in the national tests in Year 6 significantly

above the national average in three out of the last four years. The school's analysis of the unvalidated national tests for Year 6 in 2008 confirms that pupils made good progress. Challenging targets set by the school for this group were exceeded in English and mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 and above was above the national average in both of these subjects. Pupils reached average standards in science in the national tests in 2008, whereas in the science lesson observed in Year 6 standards were exceptionally high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, are very well supported and achieve standards above similar pupils nationally.

Evidence from examples of pupils' work on display in the school shows very high achievement throughout the curriculum, for example, in such foundation subjects as art and design and technology.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils throughout the school are exceptionally polite, courteous and confident. They work and play extremely well together and enjoy excellent relationships with adults in school. Older pupils, as 'Buddies', support the younger children very effectively. Pupils report very little bullying or racist name calling and know what to do if any occurs. They know how to stay safe in and out of school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of different cultures and enjoyed, for example, learning about differences between England and France as demonstrated in an interesting Year 3 assembly. Excellent opportunities to reflect upon social, moral or spiritual issues were observed in outstanding assemblies. Pupils enjoy school and understand the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Meals provided by the school offer pupils a good range of nutritious choices. However, some packed lunch boxes contain sweets and chocolate bars. Members of the school council represent pupils very effectively. They are responsible for a budget which they ensure is spent appropriately. Some members of the school council were involved in the recent appointment of a teacher at the school and interviewed candidates successfully.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. In most lessons, pupils make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. Activities are well matched to their needs. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to discuss their work so they can reflect on their learning and consolidate key ideas. Teaching assistants are well qualified and work very effectively with groups of pupils in activities. However, during some whole-class teaching sessions there are missed opportunities for teaching assistants to support learners. Pupils respond well to the informative and structured lessons. They are able to work well independently. They make good progress and achieve good standards in lessons. Assessment and teachers' marking are regular and informative. Assessment enables staff to plan teaching to match pupils' needs. In the best lessons, pupils make exceptional progress. They meet challenging targets because teachers have excellent subject knowledge and know how to motivate pupils to use their key skills. In an excellent personal, social and health education lesson, for example, the teacher used success criteria to motivate and enable pupils to assess their own learning and create excellent advertisements about being a good friend. In a minority of lessons, teaching is satisfactory and

the pace of learning is slower. Pupils' needs are not fully met in these lessons and tasks set can be too difficult or too easy. Behaviour and relationships in all lessons are excellent. Attitudes to work are positive. Tasks are generally completed to a good standard and learners enjoy their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the school. Statutory requirements are well met, as are the varying needs of pupils. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are well organised for detailed and progressive learning. The foundation subjects of the National Curriculum are covered in appropriate depth to give pupils a well rounded education, as shown in documentation and examples of pupils' work. However, some instances were seen of work which did not interest pupils sufficiently or which showed limited progression from one year to the next. The subjects of the National Curriculum are well supported by extensive provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and health education, tuition in French and an extensive array of extra-curricular activities. Provision to support cultural awareness and tolerance is first class and this supports the school's success in promoting community cohesion. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs carefully assessed. They are given rich and appropriate support, often by the well trained teaching assistants, to make good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides excellent pastoral care for all pupils. Parents and pupils are very appreciative of this provision. They rightly see it as a strength of the school. The school meets government requirements to promote pupils' safeguarding. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults in school to work with children. Those pupils spoken to felt that they were safe whilst in school and that staff knew them well and provided a ready ear when they needed to discuss a problem. Supervision is vigilant at all times and practical activities are carried out with great care to ensure that procedures, such as in games or when making things, are carried out safely. The accommodation and school grounds are well managed to promote the health and safety of pupils. The school assesses pupils' needs carefully, and from an early age, vulnerable pupils are provided with appropriate support which enables them to make good progress and develop in confidence as well as their peers. The school keeps a close eye on pupils' future prospects, paying considerable attention, for example, to developing their basic skills in speaking, listening, concentrating, applying mathematics and using computers. This supports their excellent preparation for transition to secondary education. Pupils are clear about how well they are doing and this aspect has improved since the last inspection. However, in some classes, it is not made sufficiently clear, or in sufficient detail about what they need to do specifically to make the appropriate progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall and some aspects are outstanding. Both are sharply focused on providing good quality education to enable pupils to develop personally and to achieve as well as they do. A strong team spirit permeates the teaching and support

staff and morale is high. Staff work in harmony towards agreed aims. This high degree of consistency is created and supported by the very effective and far-seeing headteacher and other senior leaders. Pupils respond to this with excellent behaviour and interest in their studies and activities and a clear sense of pride in belonging to a successful school. The school has outstanding procedures to evaluate its performance and leaders have a clear and accurate picture of its effectiveness. However, some aspects of consistency in planning the curriculum, or giving pupils academic guidance, need improving from satisfactory to good or better. Planning for improvement is carried out meticulously and has been a key feature of the school's good performance and steady improvement. It is well informed by a clear understanding among leaders and staff of the various developments taking place locally and nationally in primary education. This is further supported by excellent partnerships with organisations beyond the school, not least the local authority, from whom the school has had strong support which has led to improvement. Governors are well organised, highly effective and bring a great deal of expertise to their role. They work very well in partnership with the staff, keep a sharp eye on the interests of the parents and provide a balance of challenge and support to encourage the school to stay on agreed paths. They are helped in this by the excellent provision of information about the school and educational developments nationally, by the headteacher. The vast majority of parents think highly of the school and it is well regarded in the local community, not least for the outstanding work which it does to promote community cohesion. Administration is meticulous and the school runs like clockwork.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	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 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

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

We visited your school a few days ago to see how well you are all doing. Thank you to those who talked with us and told us about what you do in school. I promised to let you know what we thought about your school.

- Prospect Vale Primary is a good school. Some of what it does is outstanding.
- You are all given a very good education and excellent care and support.
- Your personal development is outstanding.
- You make good progress throughout the school and reach standards above the national average in English and mathematics.
- This progress begins in the early years classes where children get off to a flying start.
- You are given really good opportunities to practise speaking and listening.
- You also do well in a wide range of other interesting subjects and activities.
- The teaching is good and you all enjoyed the lessons we saw.
- You concentrate very well in lessons and your behaviour is excellent.
- The school is very successful in helping you all to get on so well together.
- The school is very well managed. The headteacher, governors and staff work very hard to ensure that the school continues to get better.

To help them improve the school further, I have asked them to:

- improve those few lessons which are satisfactory so they become good
- ensure that your learning always progresses evenly from year to year
- help you to be clearer about how to improve your work.

Best wishes for the future at Prospect Vale.