

Pownall Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106089
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	324328
Inspection date	8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	419
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 Kathryn Keogh
Headteacher	Mrs D Ashcroft
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bramhall Lane South Bramhall Stockport Cheshire SK7 2EB
Telephone number	0161 4391105
Fax number	0161 4395472

Age group	4–11
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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: the school's capacity to maintain its high standards of academic achievement and pupils' personal development; the relative strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning across the school and the quality of the leadership at all levels in the school.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, its own assessment records and from national assessment data. Reports to governors were examined, along with a range of pupils' written work. There were interviews with senior members of staff, pupils, governors and an officer from the local authority. Lessons were visited and parents' questionnaire returns were analysed. 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 in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves an area of relative social and economic advantage. For example, a very low proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. It has no nursery provision of its own but most children have pre-school experience before they arrive. One child in ten has a minority ethnic heritage, but very few are at an early stage of learning English. A smaller than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities; mainly dyslexia, emotional, speech, hearing, physical or autistic spectrum needs. The school has numerous awards, including basic skills and inclusion accreditation and the Sportsmark and Artsmark. The headteacher retires at the end of this term after long service at the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pownall Green provides an outstanding standard of education for its pupils. Previous inspection judgements show that this has been the case for many years.

Achievement and standards are consistently outstanding in all subjects and for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. From above average standards on entry into Reception, children make better than expected progress throughout the school to reach standards much higher than expected for their age by the time they leave Year 2, and again in Year 6. For example, the proportion of children achieving Level 3 in Year 2, in 2007 was significantly higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions of pupils achieving Level 5 in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 were around twice the national average in all three subjects. Provisional results for 2008 show the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or better is again high.

Standards are so high and pupils achieve so well because the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Having two adjacent classes in each age group facilitates teamwork within each year group. Pairs of teachers plan together exceptionally well, sharing workloads and ideas. This teamwork is an important factor in maintaining an innovative approach and the regular sharing of good practice. Every lesson has clearly identified objectives for pupils' learning and success criteria which are shared with them and referred to later in the lessons. The work is well matched to the mix of abilities in each group. Higher attaining pupils are thoroughly challenged and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive extra from well briefed and well deployed teaching assistants. An effective blend of mixed ability teaching, and ability sets for mathematics and English, is complemented well by specialist teaching in music, French, and information and communication technology.

Parents are understandably very pleased with the school. They love the friendly, welcoming atmosphere, the children's obvious happiness in school and the positive, caring yet challenging approach of the staff. One parent spoke of her daughter thinking it is unfair when there are school holidays, she loves the school so much.

Many others praise the very effective leadership of the headteacher and point out that she will be a hard act to follow.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to the school and this is evident from their well above average attendance and their extremely positive attitudes to their lessons. Behaviour during the inspection was exemplary both in lessons and around the school. Of particular note is the lively and civilised play in each of the school's three playgrounds. Pupil playground organisers are easily recognised in their bright coloured baseball caps and do an excellent job of making sure that no one is left out. There are rotas to prevent any one year group dominating the best areas or the most popular play equipment. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

The pupils feel safe. They know about the importance of exercise, eating healthily and they play a full part in the school and wider communities. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. The curriculum pupils receive is rich and creative. It is much more than just the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, although provision for these subjects is excellent. The wide range of well attended extra-curricular activities is an additional strength of the school.

Pupils are clear about how well they are doing, and told the inspector that their teachers make it 'fun to learn' and give them lots of 'hands on stuff' as well as lots of opportunities to discuss things with their 'talk partners'. The quality of the care, support and guidance that every pupil receives is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures conform to the latest guidelines. There are no significant differences in achievement between the various groups of children in the school. Outstanding partnerships with other agencies promote pupils' well-being very effectively.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The key to it all is the splendid leadership of a very experienced and incredibly inspirational headteacher. Very astute staffing appointments over a good many years, well established policies of continual professional development and shared leadership has brought about dedicated teams of self-critical professionals at all levels in the school. They make sure that every child is enthused, supported and thoroughly stretched. The school is not complacent despite its success.

The governors are a perceptive and well informed group of people who challenge the headteacher as well as giving her valuable support. Finances are very well managed and wisely spent on, for example, imaginative improvements to the playground areas and equipment and on a magnificent new music room, which adds to the school's already notable reputation for the quality of its music. A music teacher at the school has won a national award for the quality of her work. The school gives excellent value for money and outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is outstanding. Children begin their Reception year with higher levels of skill than children nationally, except for their emotional and social development, which in many cases is relatively underdeveloped for their age. At first, some children find it difficult to take turns and share fairly. But activities such as caring for and taking a 'pet' toy home are helping to deal with this. Overall, the children flourish and get off to a flying start in this Foundation year, and most exceed the goals expected of them by the time they join Year 1. This is due to the excellent quality of care and of teaching they receive. Skilled support staff also play a significant role in helping to ensure that children settle into school routines quickly. All the staff foster children's curiosity and enjoyment of learning exceptionally well. Detailed records are kept on each child, which enables staff to track individual progress very carefully. Children are encouraged to learn in different ways. The outside learning area has been upgraded recently and is used to very good effect.

What the school should do to improve further

As an outstanding school, there are no areas for improvement that are not already well in hand in the school's current improvement plan. The most immediate challenge is to ensure as smooth as possible a transition to the new leadership at the beginning of next term.

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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 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?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	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

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 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	1
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**

Inspection of Pownall Green Primary School, Stockport, SK7 2EB

I enjoyed enormously the day I spent working alongside so many of you in lessons as I inspected your school last week. Thank you for making me so welcome and a special thank you to those pupils from Years 5 and 6 who gave up so much of their lunchtime to talk to me.

I can see why you love being at Pownall Green. It's a hidden gem that can't be seen from the main road. You have to travel down a narrow passageway to behind the telephone exchange. Then behind the building there are exciting playgrounds, full of interesting constructions to enliven your play times, carefully supervised and very well used.

I don't think you will be surprised to hear that I think your school is outstanding. It is brilliantly led and managed, you are so very well taught, the activities in your lessons are so interesting and the achievement and standards you reach are excellent. A great deal of the credit for the high standards in the school must go to you, the pupils. You work so hard, take your learning so seriously, and your attendance at school is so regular. I was pleased to hear that 40 children last year won certificates for 100% attendance throughout the whole year. Impressive also is how well you all work with your talking partners in class.

Everyone is so friendly and so positive. There is such mutual respect between pupils and staff in the school. I think it rightly deserves its excellent reputation in the local community. The teachers track your progress exceptionally well and help you if you are not achieving as well as you should.

There are no areas for improvement I can suggest that your school is not already planning to work on, so all that remains is for me to hope that you continue to work as hard and thoroughly enjoy your remaining time at such an outstanding school.