

# Widey Court Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113305
<b>Local Authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	325792
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Logan

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	615
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	D Torbuck
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patrick Marsh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Widey Lane Crownhill Plymouth PL6 5JS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 773909
<b>Fax number</b>	01752 772247

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large suburban primary school. The pupils are predominantly White British, with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average, and is highest among the younger pupils. Almost all pupils have had some pre-school experience. Their attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the Reception class, is broadly similar to the levels expected for their age.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement, especially in writing, the effective use of assessment to increase the pace of pupils' learning, particularly of the more able and those whose first language is not English, and the urgency and rigour with which school leaders set challenging goals based upon their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

The school's performance at Key Stage 1 has declined since the last inspection. While standards at Year 6 are broadly average, on a rising trend, there has been a sustained decline at Year 2, with below average standards in 2008, particularly in writing. Standards in writing are now too low up to and including Year 4. In addition, able pupils have not made as much progress as they should. While senior leaders have been slow to tackle this decline, some crucial actions have been taken in the last two terms that are starting to make a difference. For example, greater priority has been given to the teaching of language skills in the EYFS. Older pupils are grouped by ability in literacy and numeracy lessons. More rigorous assessment procedures and a range of intensive literacy support programmes have been implemented across the school. As a result, pupils are making satisfactory progress in most lessons, although the rate of improvement is not rapid enough to ensure that the legacy of underachievement is fully eradicated. Consequently, progress and achievement remain inadequate.

Leadership and management are inadequate. While the leadership team has enthusiastically and successfully developed the Extended Schools provision, leaders have given less attention to the use of challenging targets to raise pupils' achievement. School self-evaluation, though broadly satisfactory, has not been sufficiently rigorous. However, a recognition in the last two terms that standards were slipping has led to a series of well-judged actions which are now having an impact on pupils' progress. These are strongly supported by the newer members of the leadership team and the effective middle managers. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, but monitoring is not yet incisive enough to ensure further improvement. More rigorous assessment procedures and additional training are ensuring that staff have the skills and knowledge to plan accurately for the range of pupils' needs and to accelerate progress. While governance is satisfactory, governors do not have a sufficiently clear view of the school's performance.

The school has its strengths. Parents value the inclusive ethos, the sense of community and the good support for individual pupils. As one commented, 'A very happy environment...the teachers always have my child's best interests at heart.' Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and their personal development is good. They behave well, feel very safe and are confident that adults will help them. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Many aspects of care are good and the school is working to reduce inconsistencies in academic guidance and the marking of work and to enhance the impact of target setting on pupils' achievement. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils with additional learning needs receive effective support and make satisfactory progress. However, support for pupils at an early stage of learning English is less effective because staff lack access to expertise or specialist training to assess and meet pupils' needs. Some aspects

of the curriculum are good, but weaknesses in writing mean that it is only satisfactory overall. Pupils enthusiastically support the good range of extra-curricular activities, which add much to their personal development and enjoyment.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

From broadly average levels of attainment on entry, Reception children achieve satisfactorily. Effective induction arrangements enable them to settle in quickly. They are cared for well. Relationships are supportive, so that children make good gains in personal and social development. Links with parents are well developed. Children behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Satisfactory teaching ensures that children make at least satisfactory progress across the areas of learning. That said, much of their learning is adult-directed and children do not have enough opportunities to initiate activities. The outdoor environment is not used effectively enough to extend learning. The proportion of children working at the expected level when they enter Year 1 is similar to that found nationally. However, in recent years, there have been weaknesses in children's progress in aspects of language development. The new EYFS leader has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve provision and has already acted resolutely to redress this issue by implementing a systematic approach to teaching phonics. This is already enabling children to become more skilled in linking sounds and letters. Their skills in calculation also show improvement. Good assessment procedures effectively support a smooth transition to Year 1.

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

- Raise standards at Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that pupils make more rapid progress in writing across the school.
- Make better use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils, particularly higher attainers and those at an early stage of learning English, achieve at a faster rate.
- Ensure that school leaders are more rigorous in their monitoring and respond more rapidly when weaknesses are identified.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Standards at Year 6 have been broadly average for the last three years, showing a modest increase year on year. Although offering only satisfactory challenge, Year 6 targets were largely met in 2008. Typically, older pupils make satisfactory progress. However, overall standards in Year 2 have been in steady decline and were below average in 2008, particularly in writing. Few pupils were working at the higher levels. Progress in Years 1 and 2 was inadequate in 2008. While staffing issues have contributed to the situation, the lack of focus on language development in the EYFS has been a crucial factor. Although school leaders have taken action and the tracking of pupils' progress suggests that, with more robust teaching, performance in the current Year 2 is rising, the effects of past underperformance remain evident, particularly in writing, up to Year 4. The progress pupils are currently making, while satisfactory when set against the national picture, is not yet rapid enough to eradicate the legacy of underachievement. However, teaching in ability groups across Years 3 to 6, a greater focus on the potential of able pupils, teachers' higher expectations, more sharply focused intervention and support provision and more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress mean that the school is now better placed to accelerate pupils' progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic, sociable and caring. They enjoy school, particularly when challenged by the work. Pupils behave well, feel secure and say that that bullying is rare. Their moral and social development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity, promoted through the curriculum and good international links. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated. Both the school and eco-councils are effective, enabling pupils to make a good, positive contribution to the community. A wide range of 'jobs' and roles such as peer mediators contribute to developing responsibility. Pupils have a good awareness of safe practices, coping well with the small play areas. Relationships with the wider community, through links with local schools, are well developed. Pupils' good personal qualities contribute well to their economic well-being but this is only satisfactory because of inconsistent progress in basic skills.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers are enthusiastic and committed, and have secure subject knowledge. Their relationships with pupils are good. Teaching overall is satisfactory, although a number of lessons observed were good. At its best, the teaching provides challenge for pupils and promotes good progress. However, because the monitoring of lessons is not consistently focused on pupils' progress, the impact of the teaching on pupils' learning is inconsistent. For example, the pace of lessons is sometimes rather slow. Teachers occasionally talk too much, leaving too little time for pupils to reflect. Planning, whilst satisfactory overall, does not always take account of the full range of pupils' needs. The school has recognised the need for a common approach to marking, and for more consistent use of pupils' targets and self-assessment, building upon the work already done, so that pupils have clear guidance for improving their work. Current staff training is focused on the accurate evaluation of information from the checks on pupils' progress so that teachers are clear as to what pupils need to do next. Teaching assistants are now deployed well to support the additional learning programmes for pupils who have been making slower progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

A start has been made on revising the curriculum to provide more practical opportunities within a topic framework. The impact of each new unit is being carefully evaluated and modifications made. The provision for music, physical education, French and information and communication technology (ICT) is good, successfully enhancing pupils' skills and enjoyment. Although the overall support for the development of basic skills is satisfactory, there have been weaknesses in the development of writing, although the school has taken recent action to deal with these. Even so, opportunities to practise writing across the curriculum are not yet fully developed. Those pupils identified as gifted or talented have satisfactory access to enrichment activities, although the level of challenge for these pupils within lessons could be raised further. The provision for pupils who need additional support is carefully focused on what they most need to learn. The extensive extra-curricular provision is good. It includes the enrichment and extended day activities, themed events such as the 'Victorian Day', and the challenging residential opportunities for older pupils.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Pastoral care is a strength. Training and procedures in relation to child protection and first aid are thorough. Parents rightly feel that the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Staff value individual children, contributing strongly to their good personal development. Through its specialist worker, the school effectively supports families with particular needs. Links with external agencies are good. The school takes a resolute position in relation to issues around race equality. School leaders have recognised that academic guidance is less robust and are working for a more consistent approach across the school. Pupils have individual targets in literacy, though not explicitly in numeracy. Older pupils usually know their targets and some can evaluate their progress. However, inconsistent implementation of targets means that they have not had enough impact on raising achievement across the school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

Senior leaders, including the headteacher, have not, in the past, given sufficient attention to pupils' achievement. Although the school runs smoothly and has developed some aspects of its work well, its strategic direction has not been sufficiently clear and the analysis and evaluation of pupils' performance has not been securely embedded. Across the school, academic targets have not been sufficiently challenging. Senior leaders accept that they 'have taken their eye off the ball', but have identified the core causes and have taken a series of appropriate actions in the last two terms, all sharply focused on the key weaknesses. These are enthusiastically supported by staff, particularly the middle managers, and are beginning to have an impact, suggesting that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily reflected in school relationships. The external partnerships to support pupils' well-being are good and community cohesion is satisfactory. However, those teaching pupils at an early stage of learning English have insufficient access to specialist support and guidance. Governors bring considerable expertise and commitment to the school, but are not yet sufficiently focused on the standards pupils attain.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

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

29 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Widey Court Primary School, Plymouth PL6 5JS

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed having the opportunity to meet and talk to you. We could see that you are proud of your school and were impressed by the way you look after each other and how well you get on. However, although those of you who are older do reasonably well at school, some of you are not learning as quickly as you should be. We want the school to improve as soon as possible so inspectors will visit again in the near future to see how much progress has been made.

- These are the main things that we found.
- You behave well in lessons and most of you work hard.
- While older pupils reach similar standards to many others across the country, the teaching has not always helped younger pupils to make the progress of which they are capable, especially in writing. Many of you could learn at a faster pace.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for well, and you understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise.
- The curriculum is satisfactory and there are lots of interesting extra-curricular activities, which many of you support.
- Those who are in charge at present have made some changes recently, but need to get things moving at a faster pace.

We are asking the school to make four changes so that you do even better.

- Improve the standards you reach in Years 1 and 2.
- Help you to make better progress and reach higher standards in writing.
- Make sure that teachers use information they have about you to plan activities which really make you think and which help you learn more quickly.
- School leaders need to keep a very close eye on how well you are learning and take action without delay if they realise that something is not working.

You can help by continuing to work hard. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

George Logan

Lead Inspector