

Plympton St Maurice Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113316
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	325794
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin James

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)	162
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	Linda Pearce
Headteacher	Susan Soper
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Plympton Hill Plymouth PL7 1UB
Telephone number	01752 337427

Age group	4–11
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The majority of these pupils need support with reading and writing. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of one Reception class. In recognition of its work, the school has received the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. A privately run pre-school shares the school site.

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. As a result of its excellent provision, particularly teaching, pupils make exceptional progress. The secret of the school's success is the highly effective leadership and management. The headteacher and other senior members of staff, ably supported by the governors, are a dedicated and passionate team, who are committed to doing the best they can for their pupils. Self-evaluation is very effective in pinpointing where improvement is needed to move the school forward. For instance, the lower standards attained by older girls in 2007, when compared with those reached by boys, were identified, and remedial measures were rapidly, and very successfully, put in place.

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is outstanding. When children start in the EYFS, their knowledge and skills are below those expected for their age, and are well below the level expected in aspects of literacy and numeracy. During their time in Reception, the children achieve well, reaching average standards overall, although some weaknesses remain, in writing in particular. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average, reflecting exceptional progress in relation to pupils' starting points in the school.

The school has established the highest quality systems for tracking the progress of pupils as they move up through the school. Based on this information, pupils are set very challenging targets for improving the standard of their work. For their part, the pupils know their targets well and they are keen to achieve them. Teachers have the highest expectations of their pupils, and continually challenge them in the work they provide. Teaching assistants are also very well deployed in supporting pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or difficulties.

As a result of the exceptional quality of care, pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning because classrooms are stimulating environments and high quality work is celebrated. Further, pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary. Parents hold very positive views about the school. One said, representing the views of many, 'My children are doing very well at school, and really enjoy being there'. Another added, 'I am a very grateful parent'.

The curriculum contributes very well both to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their learning. In Years 1 to 6, it is interesting and varied and helps to make pupils very aware of the need to follow a safe and healthy lifestyle. The school routinely reviews its curriculum, and it recognises that more use could be made of the outdoor area in supporting work in the various aspects of the EYFS curriculum. The improvements that have been made both recently and since the previous inspection, the quality of the current provision and the progress being made by pupils show that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the EYFS because they are taught well. The children are happy in school and their behaviour is exemplary. The staff work hard to create a friendly and very caring learning environment. The children also benefit from the good links that are established with both parents and the pre-school. Adults provide the children with a good balance between teacher-led activities and chances for them to choose what they will do for themselves. They interact well with children, and take every opportunity to help them develop various skills.

Adults frequently talk with the children, and a wide variety of reading and writing activities helps to tackle weaknesses in literacy skills. A good range of resources is provided, and the outdoor area is used regularly. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to make full use of the outdoor facilities in all areas of the curriculum. The EYFS leader uses her knowledge and enthusiasm well in ensuring that the provision is good, and other staff members support her well in providing for children's various needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more use of the outdoor area to support children's learning in all aspects of the EYFS curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children get off to a good start in the EYFS, and overall they reach average standards. However, a number of children continue to have weaknesses in their literacy and numeracy skills, especially in relation to writing, even though they make good gains in these areas.

By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Science is a particular strength, and in the national tests in 2008, two thirds of pupils attained higher than the level expected for pupils of this age. In 2007, girls did not attain as well as boys. The school identified this weakness and, through carefully targeted support, the issue has been successfully addressed, with boys and girls now performing equally well. The standards attained in Year 6 show that pupils have made exceptional overall progress in relation to their below average starting point in the school. Outstanding provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and as a result they make rapid progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, and is firmly based on the school's very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour, and their great enthusiasm for learning are important reasons why they achieve so very well. Pupils play happily together and they say that bullying is not a problem. Consequently, they feel both safe and well cared for in school. Pupils really enjoy coming to school, as shown by their good attendance. They use their initiative very well when carrying out responsible jobs, and the school council has been very active in identifying and implementing improvements to the school grounds. Pupils also raise money for charities, and they are regularly involved in a wide range of activities in both Plympton and Plymouth. The school is particularly proud of its award winning involvement in the Young Motion Plymouth film-making festival.

Pupils have an exceptional understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles. They eat healthy meals and they benefit greatly from the opportunities provided for physical activity. The school very successfully develops in its pupils a range of personal skills. These, and the excellent progress they make in literacy and numeracy, prepare them exceptionally well for their next stage of education, and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers provide very interesting lessons for pupils, using a wide range of resources and strategies, and based on excellent subject knowledge. One pupil reported that, 'Teachers make lessons fun'. Classes are very well managed and relationships are a strength. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well, and are keen to learn and ready to work hard. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to motivate pupils and develop their understanding. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to promote learning, especially that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This ensures they are able to join in all class activities and make outstanding progress.

Teachers' ongoing assessment of pupils' work is particularly strong, and they provide pupils with a clear understanding about how to improve their work. Planning is very good, providing tasks well matched to pupils' interests and competences. Pupils therefore progress exceptionally well in their academic work and become responsible, mature young people.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum enables pupils to study a broad and very interesting range of subjects and topics, and this contributes significantly to their outstanding progress. There is a good emphasis on the use of the school's very attractive grounds, as well as the wider area around the school. The provision of French also benefits pupils' learning. Links between subjects are very well made, to produce topics that really motivate pupils. A particular emphasis has also been placed on the use of literacy and numeracy in other subjects, to provide pupils with every opportunity to raise the standard of their work in these important areas. An exceptional range of tasks and activities are provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There is a very good emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. There is an outstanding range of outings, visitors and after-school clubs, which pupils much appreciate and which they support with enthusiasm.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are highly committed to ensuring the best possible academic and personal progress for all pupils. Pastoral care is a priority, and parents greatly value the caring approach of the school towards their children. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust, with potential risks properly assessed. Outside agencies are used most effectively to support pupils when a need is identified. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy living, and they are regularly reminded of the need to take care, for instance when doing physical education.

Exemplary practice is evident in the assessment of pupils' learning and progress. Teachers help pupils negotiate their targets, and pupils understand clearly how to reach them. This is a major factor in pupils' outstanding achievement. They develop excellent insight into their strengths and weaknesses, and they use this knowledge very effectively to move themselves forward. Teachers often add very helpful comments on how to improve, when they mark pupils' books.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the pupils receive a very good education and achieve exceptionally well. The headteacher leads with enthusiasm and commitment, and her dynamic approach is supported most effectively by other senior members of staff. There is very good communication and teamwork, together with a clear and shared focus on identifying and tackling weaknesses, as well as in embracing new initiatives. Every action has been aimed at helping pupils to achieve as well as they can. Pupils' learning also benefits from the development of strong community links, both within the school and locally, as well as through the good links that have been developed with schools in Ghana and France. Community cohesion and pupils' understanding of cultural diversity are promoted well.

In the school's self-evaluation, senior leaders demonstrate that they have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The effectiveness of this self-evaluation is illustrated well by the exceptional improvement made since the previous inspection. Further, the school's current priority, to extend the use of the outdoor area in the EYFS, is well chosen. The school's overall view of itself, however, is modest. This is because it is always trying to improve itself further. Governance is good. Governors are actively involved, for example, in monitoring the school's financial position. They readily exercise their role of 'critical friends' should the need arise. They are currently developing their role further through a programme of school and classrooms visits, to increase their overall awareness of the school's provision.

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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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
The extent to which 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 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?	2
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**

29 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Plympton St Maurice Primary School, Plymouth PL7 1UB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our visit and it was a pleasure talking with you. My colleague especially liked talking to the school council, and I really enjoyed joining you in assembly. I am writing to tell you what we found out about the school, what we think is good, and what we think could be made better. You are in an outstanding school, where you are doing exceptionally well with your work.

These things are some of the strengths of the school:

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- Teaching is excellent, and you are provided with interesting and informative lessons.
- You have a very clear idea about how to improve your work.
- Your behaviour and your attitudes to your work are excellent.
- You really enjoy the wide range of activities that the school provides, such as visits and different clubs.
- You know a lot about how important it is to eat healthy food and take exercise.
- The staff know you extremely well and take very great care of you.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school.

This is what the school has been asked to improve:

- Provide more opportunities for the children in the Reception class to use the outdoor area.

You can all help the school by continuing to work hard, and showing very good attitudes towards your work.

We wish you all good luck for the future.

Best wishes,

Martin James

Lead Inspector