

Plumberow Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115273
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326167
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	602
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	Mr Rob Stanesby
Headteacher	Mr Ian Barton
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hamilton Gardens Hockley Essex SS5 5BX
Telephone number	01702 203741
Fax number	01702 201978

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Inspection number	326167

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average sized school serving Hockley and the surrounding area. Although attainment varies within each large cohort, children often have levels above those expected for their ages when they start school. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are catered for in three Reception classes. The proportion of the pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language. There is a below average but increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; very few have statements of special educational need. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication, behavioural, emotional and social, and a range of physical difficulties. The school caters currently for six pupils who are cared for by the local authority. The school has grown rapidly in recent years and this has meant more pupils joining at times other than is normal. The headteacher has been in post, along with other senior staff, for less than a year.

The school has a Healthy School's Award, and Activemark and Sportsmark awards for their promotion of physical education.

There is a before and after school club, a holiday club, and pre-school provision on the site. These are not managed by the governing body and are inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has been through significant changes to its leadership. Through these changes, it has maintained its strengths while halting a recent drop in standards by the end of Year 6. Good teaching is resulting in pupils making good progress. The pupils' personal development is outstanding, resulting in excellent behaviour and very strong attitudes towards learning. Because of this, pupils are being well prepared for the next stage in their learning and their future lives. A very large majority of the parents agree that this is a good school and, as one wrote, 'The school caters for the child as a whole.'

Pupils are polite and mature in their relationships with each other and with adults. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and they talk about how much they enjoy school. They make the most of the responsibilities given to them. These excellent attitudes support their learning. Although progress through Key Stage 2 had slipped in recent years, the new leadership very quickly stepped in and addressed this with a range of initiatives. These have already had a positive impact. Progress currently being made throughout the school is good, and standards are rising. Although still broadly in line with those expected at the end of Year 6, especially in science and mathematics, they are above average in Year 2 and also for the current Year 5. This indicates that the school is again building positively on the good progress made in the Reception classes.

The recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher are providing the school with an excellent focus on raising standards. The school development planning has a clear educational direction and the self evaluation is accurate and honest. The newly reorganised senior leadership team are also effective and working together well, taking appropriate responsibility and having a clearer picture of progress throughout the school. Subject leadership is less well developed. They lack the time and skills to closely assess progress in their subjects and to spread existing good practice.

Good teaching is consistent throughout the school and this is having a positive impact on achievement and on pupils' personal development. Teachers plan well together, although there are times when there is a lack of challenge in lessons for the most able pupils. While there is good practice in English, marking of pupils' work does not always make clear in other subjects what pupils need to do to improve. Teachers track pupils' progress accurately and this is used well in grouping and setting, as well as highlighting any underachievement. Very effective interventions are put in place, such as those that have helped boost the achievement of the current Year 6. Teaching assistants work effectively especially with the less able pupils. Pastoral care is strong and the school works hard to ensure pupils are safe and well cared for in all activities. The curriculum is well planned and especially well enriched by specialist teaching of swimming, physical education, music and information and communication technology. There is an extensive and well attended range of clubs, sports and other after school activities.

The improvements made since the last inspection, including the improvements to the way the school promotes community cohesion locally and their good plans for extending this work, and the impact of the current senior leadership team show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with standards that exceed those expected for their age, especially in the aspects of early mathematics, social and creative development. They make good progress, particularly with respect to their early reading and writing skills and their physical development. Working relationships are very good and adults keep up a constant flow of conversation with children, enabling them to develop their vocabulary and self-confidence. At times the activities were too adult-led and did not give children sufficient opportunities to make their own choices. Children in the Reception classes thoroughly enjoy the time they spend at school and the care to ensure their happiness and welfare is excellent. The school enjoys parents' full support and close links with local pre-school providers help children to settle in quickly and get off to a good start. Sensitive, well-planned induction procedures ensure they rapidly become used to the daily routine. Adults manage children's behaviour skilfully and they have consistently high expectations. Children's personal development is excellent. They are very interested in the activities provided and their enthusiasm, along with a carefully planned curriculum and good teaching, helps them to make good progress in their learning. The imaginatively designed, readily accessible outdoor area is well resourced and its regular use forms an integral and very effective part of the curriculum and children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in mathematics and science, by increasing the level of challenge especially for the most able pupils, and through marking that shows pupils how to improve.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so they have a better understanding of standards and more opportunities to spread good practice.
- Put into place the planned expansion of work to develop pupils' understanding of how other people in the country and the world live.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their attainment on entry to the school, children make good progress through the Reception classes and Key Stage 1, reaching consistently above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science are below those expected and this remains an area for development, recognised by the school. In Key Stage 2, progress has been affected by a number of issues in recent years, including pupils joining the school at times other than normal as the school has grown in size. Standards in the 2008 national tests were broadly average but this represented below average progress from their levels in Year 2. However, the leadership has moved quickly and successfully to address this, through support and training for staff, more focused intervention groups and better monitoring of teaching and learning. The current picture of achievement is good overall. Standards are often good in English but remain broadly satisfactory in science and mathematics. Standards in art and design and information and communication technology are good, while many pupils reach very high standards in their physical education. Those with learning difficulties or who have a physical disability make equally good progress as their peers owing to good recognition and well planned intervention. The very small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make progress that is in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent personal development makes a strong contribution to their learning. They enjoy school and are eager to learn. From their very earliest days in school they are supported well and encouraged to be confident learners. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and pupils have no hesitation in sharing their thoughts and ideas with adults. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through the school council. They feel they are listened to and that their work on the council has made the school a better place to be. Pupils have limited opportunities to engage with others from different cultural backgrounds. They behave extremely well in all lessons, in the playground and around school. As a consequence, pupils feel safe and are very happy to come to school. They work cooperatively with their peers. They also play happily together and can explain clearly what to do if things start to go wrong. The pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle and can talk in depth about the need to keep fit and eat the right kind of food. The measures put in place to improve attendance have been successful as the school's figures are now above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teachers employ a variety of teaching styles, including the good use of information and communication technology, to make lessons interesting. Imaginative use of resources supports pupils' learning. Most teachers are effective at using questions to discover the full extent of pupils' understanding. This was noted in a Year 4 lesson where pupils were effectively engaged in learning about synonyms. The teacher used pupils' responses successfully to consolidate previous learning, clarify new ideas and to move them rapidly on in their written work. However, in some lessons, questions are not sufficiently challenging for the most able. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils have many opportunities to apply the skills they are taught. All teachers establish a strong rapport with pupils and this generates a secure environment where pupils can investigate and try out new ideas with confidence. Support staff provide skilled help for pupils' with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and so they achieve well. The teachers use the information from pupils' assessments to plan their lessons well. Occasionally, planning and its use do not effectively challenge the more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enriched with a very good range of extra-curricular activities and it meets the needs of pupils well because it is based on what makes them want to learn. Care is taken to ensure pupils' skills are progressively built on and that there is consistency in the way work is presented. There are good links between subjects, for example linking science, drama and art to the history topic, and making it creative and enjoyable for pupils. Most projects link literacy, numeracy and information communication technology well. However, the school has identified the need to improve resources and extend the use of computer skills across all areas of the curriculum. Art and physical education are particular strengths. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' achievements successfully in all subjects. A well planned programme of social and health education ensures pupils' excellent personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong commitment of staff and governors to safeguarding the welfare of pupils is successfully achieved. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are fully in place, understood by staff and rigorously implemented. Staff ensure that all pupils are included and can play their full part in school life. They are supported well in developing social skills and self-confidence. Through the new assessment procedures pupil's progress is measured more systematically and this helps to identify any who may be underachieving and in need of extra learning support. The school works well with parents and other agencies to ensure pupils' good progress, particularly for those who have a statement of special educational need. A small number of parents feel there could be more communication between school and home about their children's progress but the practice observed during the inspection was effective and many other parents praised the 'open-door' policy. In literacy, teachers provide pupils with clear guidance about their performance and how they can improve. At its best this information is used carefully to plan their next steps in learning, to keep a check on progress and to set suitably challenging targets. This is not evident in other subjects, especially in mathematics and science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since taking up their posts the new headteacher and deputy headteacher have provided an excellent focus on raising standards. They have created a positive and supportive team spirit among staff, where newly qualified teachers are supported well and everyone is working together. The leadership's evaluation of the school is both accurate and focused on the right priorities. The senior management team has worked hard to improve their understanding of data and the information available from the tracking of pupils' progress. Subject leaders have not yet had as much opportunity to develop their understanding of standards and progress in their subjects, or to spread good practice. The governing body has formalised its methods of holding the school to account and now provides a good level of support and challenge. Meetings are well organised and minuted. Regular visits help governors understand the school strengths and development needs well. The school has worked hard on promoting pupils' understanding of the local community. There are good plans in place to extend their knowledge and understanding of how other people live in this country and across the globe but these are yet to have an impact on pupils' cultural understanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2
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	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	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

22 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Plumberow Primary School, Hockley, Essex, SS5 5BX

I am writing to thank you for your help during our recent visit to your school, and to tell you what we found.

We agree with you and your parents that you go to good school. In particular, the school is very successful in helping you develop and grow into such polite, mature and friendly people. You work hard and your behaviour is outstanding which makes it easier for your teachers to teach you new things because you listen and want to learn.

You make good progress in your learning although we feel you can do even better especially in science and mathematics. We believe that teachers can help you more by always making sure the work is hard enough to make you really think, and to ensure that their marking tells you exactly what you need to do to improve.

There have been a lot of staff changes and you have had a new headteacher and deputy headteacher this year. They, together with all the adults who work in the school, are working hard and trying to do the right things, to make your school even better. We are asking those teachers in charge of subjects to be even better aware of how well you are learning and to share some of the really good ideas they see.

In addition, the school knows it needs to do more to teach you about how other people live, both in this country and in other countries around the world.

Thank you again for your help. I hope Year 6 enjoyed their visit to the Isle of Wight. Enjoy your time at Plumberow and keep working hard!

Yours faithfully

Geof Timms

Lead inspector